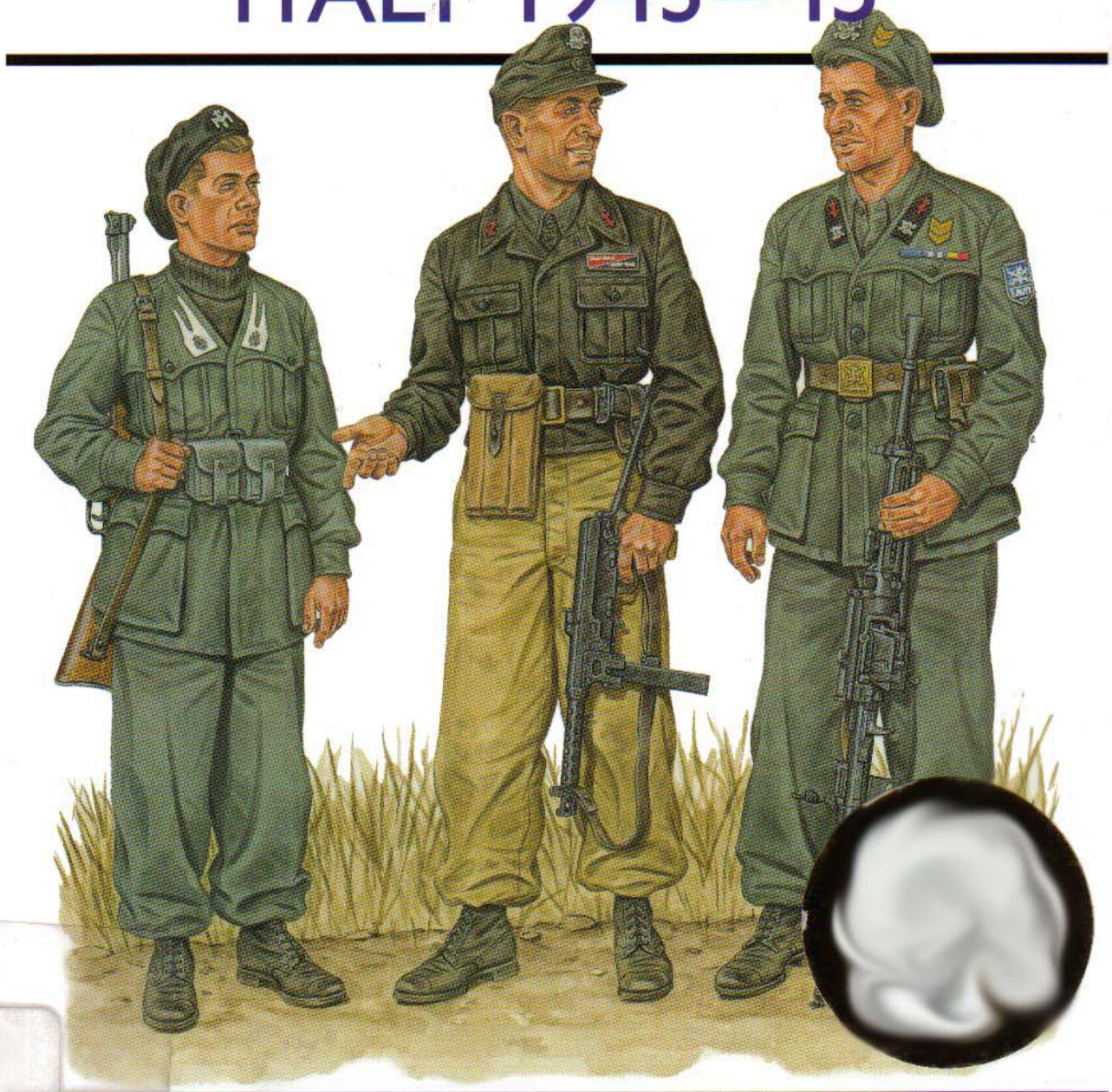
OSPREY MILITARY
MEN-AT-ARMS
353

THE ITALIAN ARMY 1940–45 (3) ITALY 1943–45



PHILIP JOWETT STEPHEN ANDREW

SERIES EDITOR: MARTIN WINDROW

MEN-AT-ARMS 353

THE ITALIAN ARMY 1940–45

(3) ITALY 1943–45

TEXT BY

PHILIP JOWETT

COLOUR PLATES BY

STEPHEN ANDREW

OSPREY MILITARY

First published in 2001 by Osprey Publishing, Elms Court, Chapel Way, Botley, Oxford OX2 9LP United Kingdom

© 2001 Osprey Publishing Limited.

All rights reserved. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. Enquiries should be addressed to the Publishers.

ISBN 1 85532 866 6

Editor: Martin Windrow
Design: Alan Hamp
Index: Alan Rutter
Originated by Colourpath, London, UK
Printed in China through World Print Ltd

01 02 03 04 05 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

FOR A CATALOGUE OF ALL TITLES PUBLISHED BY OSPREY MILITARY AND AVIATION PLEASE WRITE TO:
The Marketing Manager, Osprey Publishing Ltd, PO Box 140, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 4ZA, United Kingdom
Email: **info@ospreydirect.co.uk**

The Marketing Manager, Osprey Direct USA, c/o Motorbooks International, PO Box 1, Osceola, WI 54020-0001, USA
Email: **info@ospreydirectusa.com**

www.ospreypublishing.com

Dedication

With love to Georgia and Alexander

Author's Note

Some material of general application will be found in the first two titles in this series (see inside back cover).
MAA 340 '(1): Europe 1940–43' describes and illustrates the Royal Army's 'continental' uniform, personal equipment and small arms. It includes charts of Army and MVSN rank insignia; basic organisation tables for Infantry, Alpine and Celere divisions; and a chart showing the main component units, war service and collar patches of the infantry divisions that served in Europe, including Russia.
MAA 349 '(2): Africa 1940–43' describes and illustrates the tropical uniforms worn in East and North Africa, and insignia of rank and branch. It includes the basic organisation of Armoured, Motorised, Parachute and Colonial formations, and some other units raised for service in those campaigns. A chart shows the main component units, war service and collar patches of the infantry divisions that served in Africa; and a table lists the Colonial units and their distinctive colours.

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the help of a large number of people who have assisted me in many ways. I must record my gratitude to: Stephen Andrew, Krzysztof Barbarski, James Burd, Charles Buttrey, Neil Champion, Mark Dial, Steve Kiddle, Kevin Mahoney, Guido Rosignoli, Rex Trye, and to Count Vitetti for his hospitality. Special thanks for help with photographs to Rudy D'Angelo, Franco Mesturini, Allessandro Raspagni, and to Monica Kokloj and the staff of the Museum of Modern History in Ljubljana, Slovenia. I would also like to thank James Burd, Furio Lazzarini, Marcello Ravaioli and Guido Rosignoli for their patience and their willingness to share their great knowledge of the subject with a fellow enthusiast.
Errata: MAA 340, chart p.41, and MAA 349, chart p.22 – throughout, for *colonello* read *colonnello*.

Artist's Note

Readers may care to note that the original paintings from which the colour plates in this book were prepared are available for private sale. All reproduction copyright whatsoever is retained by the Publishers. All enquiries should be addressed to:

Stephen Andrew,
87 Ellisland, Kirkintolloch, Glasgow G66 2UA, Scotland

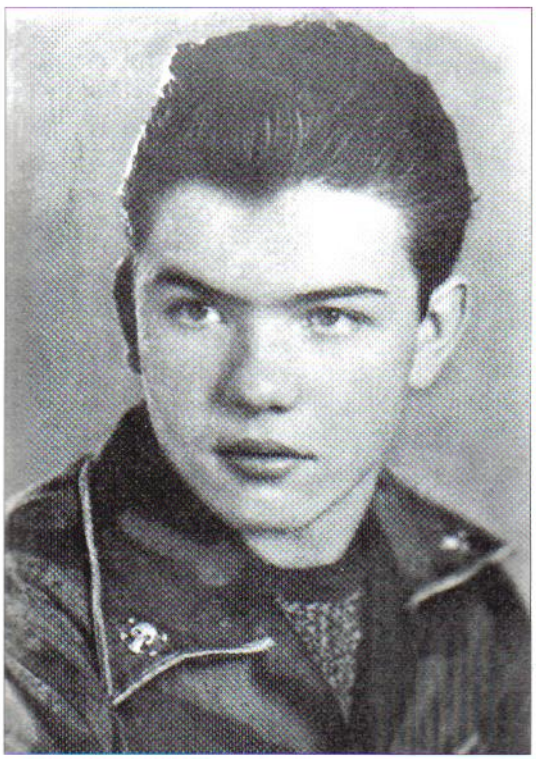
The Publishers regret that they can enter into no correspondence upon this matter.

TITLE PAGE **Soldier of the 1st Motorised Group, the first unit organised to fight on the side of the Allies after the 1943 Armistice. He wears tropical uniform with his helmet painted grey-green; note the left breast badge of this unit, the white cross on a red shield of the royal house of Savoy. See also page 34 (US National Archives)**

THE ITALIAN ARMY 1940–45 (3) ITALY 1943–45

ITALY'S DILEMMA IN SPRING 1943

THE DEFEAT OF the Axis forces in Tunisia in May 1943 and the subsequent invasion of Sicily in July were to end the Italian people's faith in Mussolini and his Fascist government. Support for the regime had been faltering for years, and the setbacks suffered by the Italian armed forces in both Russia and North Africa had disillusioned all but the most ardent or most compromised supporters of *Il Duce*. Now, with the imminent prospect of an Anglo-American invasion of Italian soil, wheels were set in motion by various factions in Rome to overthrow his 21-year-long dictatorship.



Mario Turati, a 15-year-old volunteer with the 14th 'Alberto Alfieri' Black Brigade of Pavia, who was killed in March 1945. Many of the volunteers on both sides of the vicious fighting between Fascists and anti-Fascists were as young or younger than Mario. He is wearing a camouflaged jacket with skull and crossbones badges on the collar, and what looks like a civilian pullover underneath. (Alessandro Raspagni)

The invasion of Sicily

The Italian *Commando Supremo* knew that the Allies would make their next offensive move against either Sicily, Sardinia or the occupied Greek mainland. Mussolini rightly suspected that Sicily would be the target for the Allies' first attempt to capture and hold territory in Axis-held Europe.

The Axis forces defending Sicily, nominally under the command of the Italian General Guzzoni, consisted of 230,000 men including 40,000 German troops; these latter included elite units such as Gen Paul Conrath's Panzer-Division 'Hermann Göring' north of Gela, and the 15th Panzer-Grenadier Division. The Italian garrison was made up of four infantry divisions, seven coastal infantry divisions and two coastal brigades, with about 1,500 artillery pieces. The approaches to Sicily were guarded by the island of Pantelleria, strongly fortified and held by a garrison of 12,000 men.

The Italian coastal divisions and other infantry formations had little heavy equipment. A large number of the defending troops were MVSN volunteers and many were of the older age groups. What little armour was available was made up of ex- French Renault R35s and venerable FT-17s, with a handful of equally archaic Italian Fiat 3000s. All Italy's best equipment had been lost in Russia and North Africa, and there were little in the way of new tanks and guns coming off the production lines to replace them. Anti-tank artillery was almost non-existent, with only a handful of outdated 47mm guns available; these presented no threat to the Allies' M4 Sherman tanks.

ORDER OF BATTLE ITALIAN GARRISON OF SICILY

6th Army

XII Corps

28th 'Aosta' Inf Div

26th 'Assieta' Mountain Inf Div

202nd Coastal Div

207th Coastal Div

208th Coastal Div

XVI Corps

54th 'Napoli' Inf Div

206th Coastal Div

213th Coastal Div

18th Coastal Bde

19th Coastal Bde

Reserve

4th 'Livorno' Inf Div

The fighting in Sicily saw the death of one of Italy's most valiant and long-serving officers, MVSN Gen Enrico Francisci; this veteran of at least six campaigns was known as a 'fighting general' who led from the front. He began his military career at the age of 18 in the Italo-Libyan war of 1911–12; this was followed by service in the First World War, the Ethiopian Campaign 1935–36, and the Spanish Civil War 1936–39. His Second World War service included the Greek campaign and ended with his death in action on 11 July 1943. He was the holder of one Silver and three Bronze Medals for Valour, three War Crosses for Military Valour and one for Military Merit. Pictured here shortly before his death, he wears a grey-green *bustina* with his general's rank insignia on the left side; and a light khaki 'Sahariana' jacket with the MVSN's black flames and fasces on the collar. (Rudy D'Angelo)

The Allied invasion was preceded on 10 June 1943 by the capture of the fortress island of Pantelleria, situated about half way between the North African coast and Sicily. After its fall there were no further obstacles in the way of the main invasion. Operation 'Husky' began on 10 July; despite the costly failure of a large part of the airborne element, due to the inexperience of Allied aircrew and trigger-happy Allied naval gunners, 3,300 ships successfully landed 160,000 US, British and Canadian troops and 600 tanks on the south and east coasts of the island. During the first few days of the invasion a number of desperate counter-attacks were launched against the Allied beachheads. The main attempt was against the Gela bridgehead in the south, where the US 1st Inf Div had landed with the Rangers and elements of the 2nd Armd Div; the Italian force involved included a unit of obsolete tanks. Although the attack was pressed forward bravely it soon ground to a halt with heavy Italian casualties, and the Pz-Div 'HG' also suffered great losses to Allied naval gunfire.

As in all their campaigns, the fighting abilities of the Italians differed greatly from unit to unit. The coastal divisions usually gave up without a fight, but the 'Livorno' and 'Napoli' divisions fought hard during the initial actions and elements of other units continued to fight alongside the Germans. A fighting retreat towards Messina was conducted by the Axis forces, ending on 11 August; and when it ended the Italians successfully evacuated 59,000 men, 227 vehicles and 41 artillery pieces

Anti-aircraft gun crew of an MVSN Militia unit arm 76mm shells for their 76/40 *modificata* 35 gun. Italian units defending Sicily and the coastline of mainland Italy were often made up of second grade personnel like these mostly middle-aged men. The crew wear the Adrian M1916 helmet with the black stencil of the MVSN anti-aircraft units on the front. They are all wearing grey-green cotton shirts, with ill-fitting trousers which add to their scruffy appearance. Many of these second line soldiers only had fatigue uniforms due to the general shortages. (Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore Esercito – USSME)

across the Straits of Messina to the Italian mainland. (The German withdrawal, Operation 'Lehrgang', was also executed brilliantly, evacuating nearly 40,000 men, 9,600 vehicles, 47 tanks, 94 guns and 17,000 tons of ammunition by 17 August.)

Uniforms in Sicily

The Italian Army was still reeling from its defeats in North Africa and Russia and had been given little respite to prepare for the defence of Italy. In this chaotic situation uniformity in clothing and equipment was low down its list of priorities. The Italian forces making up the garrison of Sicily wore a mixture of uniforms including both the 'continental' M1940 and M1942 grey-green wool, and tropical khaki clothing left over from the campaign in North Africa. Some coastal division soldiers were still wearing the M1937 grey-green tunic, with black collar facings, which had been obsolete for a number of years. The shortage of good uniforms was reflected by the wearing of fatigue clothing by a number of MVSN anti-aircraft troops. Photographs of the time show the cork solar topi in widespread use – in the heat of Sicily it would have been a useful item of uniform. Old M1916 Adrian-type steel helmets were also in use with the coastal divisions and MVSN units that made up a large part of the Sicilian garrison. Prisoners were also seen wearing Alpini-type felt hats. These men were most likely from one of the MVSN branches that wore this type

A group of tired and dejected soldiers of a coastal division, taken prisoner in the first days of fighting in Sicily in June 1943. The coastal divisions were usually given out-of-date equipment and uniforms, and this group is no exception. They are wearing either M1916 steel helmets or grey-green wool *bustina* caps, with what seem to be a mixture of tunics. The soldier at right foreground is wearing an M1937 tunic with black collar facings, and the white collar patch with either the orange triangle of the 206th or the blue of the 207th Coastal Division; cf Plate A3. (Imperial War Museum, London)

Table 1: Coastal Divisions, spring/summer 1943

Key
C = Coastal Inf Regts
G = Group – i.e. artillery sub-unit
Els. = Elements of

Notes: collar patches The coastal divisions wore *mostrine* of a different design to those of the infantry divisions: each was made up of a patch of one colour with a triangle of another superimposed at the bottom. Many of these patches remain unrecorded by the Italian Army archives, but those that are known are listed below – e.g. 'White P, violet T' = white patch, violet triangle.

Constituent units These hastily formed 'scratch' divisions included, on paper, numerous partial units and dispersed sub-units. We list here only the major combat units.

Div	*Inf Regts.*	*Arty. Regt.*	*Location*	*Collar patch*
201	55, 131	201	S.of France	–
202	142C, 120C, 137C	43G	Sicily	White P, violet T
203	126, 174	203	Sardinia	–
204	19C, 130C, 149C	204	Sardinia	Orange P, white T
205	127C, 128, 129	–	Sardinia	Blue P, white T
206	303, 121C, 122C, 123C	44G	Sicily	White P, orange T
207	124C, 138C, 139C	51G	Sicily	White P, blue T
208	133C	28G	Sicily	White P, lt.blue T
209	209C, 112	41	Pulgia coast	–
210	113C, 114C, 164C	–	Taranto coast	–
211	53, 118, 143	49	Calabria	White P, red T
212	103C, 115C, 144C	45G	Calabria	White P, green T
213	4, 120,139C, 140C	22G	Messina	Violet P, white T
214	103C, 148C	–	Taranto coast	–
215	6C, 14C, 108C	27G	Tuscany	Red P, dk.blue T
216	12C, 13C	–	Pisa	–
220	111C, 152C	–	Lazio	Lt.blue P, white T
221	4C, 8C	–	Lazio	Red P, white T
222	74C, 89C	–	Salerno	Green P, white T
223	Els.5, 8 Alpini Regts, 26 Alp.Bn	–	S.of France	–
224	Els.1, 3 Alp.Gps	–	Corsica	–
225	172, 173	52	Corsica	–
226	170, 171, 181	7G	Corsica	–
227	141C, 145C	–	Calabria	–
230	—-Els. 202 Div— —-	–	Sicily	Black P, white T

of headgear; the MVSN Railway, Post Border and Anti-Aircraft Militia, amongst others, wore it with a simple black band, but by 1943 it was supposed to be no longer in service.

The coastal divisions

Many of the divisions defending the coastlines of Sicily and the Italian mainland were second line and 'second rate' coastal divisions. These were usually formed from MVSN units of older age groups, many of the men being in their forties or fifties. They were basically auxiliary troops who were intended to perform labouring tasks and other second line duties. Recruited on a local basis, they were also led by officers who had mostly been called out of retirement (one unit was commanded by a second-lieutenant who had been recalled after 25 years in retirement). The morale of the Italian defenders was at an all time low and nearly all the troops were extremely war-weary. There were, of course, exceptions; some still believed passionately in the Fascist cause, but these were by now very much in the minority.

Equipment was also of poor quality. Mussolini was hoping to receive large numbers of weapons from the recently disarmed Vichy French army. When these arrived they often came without ammunition, and many had been sabotaged en route.

ITALY DIVIDED

The defeat in Sicily was to be the final nail in the coffin of Mussolini's rule and soon led to his fall from power. He was overthrown not by his enemies from outside the government but by a conspiracy from within his own Fascist Party. For months various groups within the Fascist hierarchy had been plotting against Mussolini, and this culminated in a meeting of the Fascist Grand Council on Saturday 24 July. The council was the highest constitutional authority in the state under Mussolini, but

in practice it rarely met to decide anything and its function had always been largely symbolic. After a lengthy debate Count Grandi's resolution to strip Mussolini of his powers was voted in by 19 of the council's 26 members. Surprisingly, after 21 years of dictatorship Mussolini had effectively let himself be voted out of office.

The next day Mussolini offered his resignation to King Victor Emmanuel III, who accepted it; the former dictator was now effectively under arrest. A new Italian government under Gen Badoglio – the former chief-of-staff who had resigned after the defeats in Greece in December 1940 – publicly pledged to continue the war against the Allies while at the same time secretly negotiating with the British and Americans. During August the Badoglio regime moved Mussolini from place to place to frustrate any attempt at rescuing him; finally he was taken to an isolated ski resort hotel on the Gran Sasso in the Abruzzi Mountains near Rome.

On 8 September 1943, Italy unconditionally surrendered to the Allied powers – and German troops immediately moved to take control of the country and disarm its forces. On the 10th Rome was occupied; Badoglio and the king were forced to flee south to Brindisi in Royal Navy warships. On 12 September, 90 men of an SS special forces unit led by Sturmbannführer Otto Skorzeny landed by glider on the mountaintop and rescued Mussolini. Taken to Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg on the 15th, the demoralised Mussolini let himself be persuaded to continue the fight against the Allies; under the circumstances he had little choice. On 23 September he was escorted back to Italy, and proclaimed the foundation of the Italian Social Republic with its 'capital' at the town of Salo on the shores of Lake Garda in northern Italy. On 13 October the Kingdom of Italy declared war on Germany.

The signing of a peace treaty between the new Italian government and the Allies was seen by the Germans as a great betrayal, but did not come as a complete surprise. Long-prepared contingency plans to disarm the Italian forces and take over the government were immediately put into effect in the large part of northern and central Italy into which German troops had been gradually moved in anticipation of these events. With 22 divisions in place, German units acted quickly and ruthlessly to take over Italian garrisons in both Italy and its Balkan conquests in Greece and Yugoslavia. Any resistance by Italian units was crushed with particular brutality; the Germans realised that unless they made examples of any Italian troops that would not surrender to them at once then a general insurrection might break out.

Some Italian units did resist, and thousands of Italian soldiers lost their lives. One of the most tragic cases has recently become more widely known with the success of the novel and film *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, set on the Greek island of Cefalonia, which was garrisoned by the 'Acqui' Division. The ambiguous instructions given to the Italian forces by Badoglio when announcing the Armistice with the Allies said that they should not take offensive action against German units but should defend themselves from attack – an extraordinary failure to grasp the German attitude to total war. The commander of the 'Acqui' Div on Cefalonia, Gen Antonio Gandin, was prepared to surrender his forces to the Germans but not if his men were endangered in any way. Negotiations for a peaceful surrender eventually broke down and Italian forces

opened fire on two German ships; German reinforcements were brought to the island to crush the Italians, who surrendered on 21 September after heavy fighting in which the 'Acqui' suffered 1,250 killed. Some 4,750 captured and disarmed officers and men of the 'Acqui' Division were then shot in cold blood – first all the officers, including Gen Gandin, and then the enlisted men. The 4,000 survivors of the Italian garrison were then shipped off, destined for labour camps in Germany; but their ships hit mines and a further 3,000 men died. In all 10,030 officers and men of the Cefalonia garrison lost their lives in these incidents.

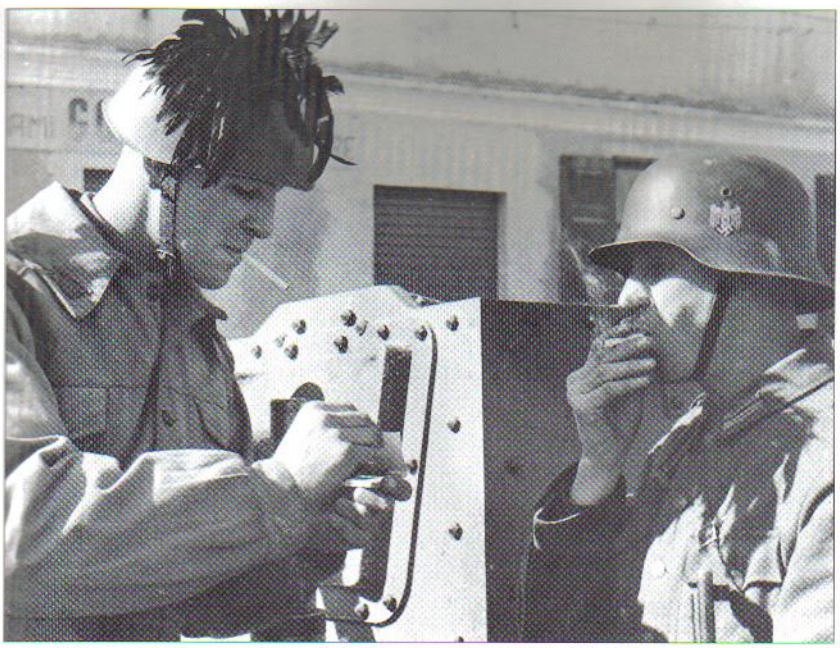
Brutal examples such as this allowed the Germans to subdue their former allies; and some 615,000 Italian soldiers were packed into cattle trucks and transported to labour camps in Germany. The conditions and treatment in these camps were bad, and more than 30,000 Italians were to die during their captivity through sheer neglect. One escape route for the Italian prisoners was to volunteer for the new army being raised to fight for the Italian Social Republic. Many took this option, some out of a desire to fight again for Fascism but others simply to escape the squalor of the internment camps.

From the first Allied landings in the south on 3 September 1943 until the final surrender of all German forces on 29 April 1945, Italy was a battleground. While Field Marshal Kesselring's German 10th and 14th Armies fought a stubborn and brilliantly conducted defensive campaign on a series of mountain and river lines, making the US and British Commonwealth forces pay dearly for every yard they advanced, the Italians themselves were bitterly divided. Many thousands stayed loyal to the Fascist government and fought in the various forces of the Italian Social Republic (RSI). At the same time many thousands of others fought against it, either alongside the Allies in the conventional 'Co-Belligerent Forces' – the 'Army of the South' – or in various partisan groups active behind German lines.

THE ARMED FORCES OF THE ITALIAN SOCIAL REPUBLIC

The Armed Forces of the Italian Social Republic were officially raised on 28 October 1943, to defend the new state from external and internal enemies. Before this date many units loyal to Mussolini had already declared their allegiance. Other units had reported to the German occupiers and made it clear that they were prepared to fight for them. Alongside the small 'new' air force and navy, the ground forces raised by the RSI belonged to three basic organisations.

The Esercito Nazionale Repubblicano (ENR, 'National Republican Army') was made up of four main divisions with a large number of smaller autonomous units. The old MVSN, the 'Blackshirt' Fascist Militia, was replaced by the Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana (GNR), which was to be responsible for internal security, providing the main anti-partisan effort. When this role became too much for the GNR it was decided to call up all able bodied members of the Fascist Party into a new militia, formed into Brigate Nere ('Black Brigades') to join the fight against the anti-Fascist guerrillas.



A soldier of the 1st Volunteer Bersaglieri Battalion 'B.Mussolini' shares a cigarette with a German ally in this propaganda photograph. The Bersagliere is wearing one of the many versions of windproof jacket in widespread use with RSI units (cf Plate B3). The traditional cockerel feathers of the light infantry branch were still worn on steel helmets by both the RSI and Co-Belligerent forces. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

Esercito Nazionale Repubblicano (ENR)

The forces raised by the newly formed Fascist government at Salo were a mixture of regular and irregular units. Four regular divisions, recruited from the vast number of Italians interned by the Germans at the time of Italy's surrender to the Allies, were trained in Germany: the 'Monterosa' Alpine, 'Italia' Bersaglieri, 'San Marco' Marine and 'Littorio' Infantry Divisions. These formed the core of the RSI's army, but were supplemented by a considerable number of small autonomous units, which in the chaotic conditions that reigned in Italy in late 1943 were usually raised locally by officers who were still loyal to Mussolini.

Apart from the RSI units that served in Italy a number of pro-German units continued to carry out occupation duties in the Balkans and southern France. Most of these units were MVSN Militia Legions that had chosen to serve the Germans or had been coerced into doing so. There were also five specialist 'smoke cover' battalions serving in the defence of the Baltic ports; and the 834th Field Hospital continued to operate on the Russian Front.

The foremost task of most RSI formations throughout the period of their existence was the waging of anti-partisan warfare. They

Officers of the 'Bergamo' Alpini Battalion of the 'Littorio' Division of the RSI army at a parade in January 1945. The colonel at right foreground displays his rank by both the number of stars on the shoulder board and the chevrons on the left of the Alpini hat. On the green double collar flames of the officer in the centre we can see the wreathed sword emblem of the RSI forces which replaced the pre-Armistice white metal star of the Royal Army. As with other branches of the ENR, a new Alpini cap badge was designed but few if any were ever issued. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

were seldom employed in fighting against the advancing Allies, although when ENR units were committed to battle they usually fought well – having thrown in his lot with the Germans the average RSI soldier or militiaman knew that if they were defeated he faced the prospect of a firing squad.

ORDER OF BATTLE

ENR Divisions trained in Germany

1st Alpini Division 'Monterosa'
1st Alpini Regiment
2nd Alpini Regt
1st Alpini Artillery Regt
plus support units
2nd Infantry Division 'Littorio'
3rd Infantry Regt
4th Alpini Regt
2nd Artillery Regt
plus support units
3rd Naval Infantry Division 'San Marco'
5th Naval Inf Regt
6th Naval Inf Regt
3rd Artillery Regt
plus support units
4th Bersaglieri Division 'Italia'
7th Bersaglieri Regt
8th 'Cacciatori degli Appennini' Regt
4th Artillery Regt
plus support units

ENR uniforms

During the short and turbulent history of the Italian Social Republic an amazing variety of uniforms were worn by the regular ENR and the para-military forces, with very little in the way of standardisation (see commentaries to colour plates). Soldiers of the four regular divisions trained in Germany were clothed in pre-1943 Italian uniforms with new insignia replacing those of the old Royal Italian Army. Some of the soldiers trained in Germany were given German small arms, and so were issued personal equipment to match. The German belt with Mauser cartridge pouches was issued, but because of shortages only

GNR militiamen throw German stick grenades as they defend a railway embankment in this obviously posed photograph. Both men are wearing M1940 grey-green tunics with the silver fasces of the GNR's predecessor, the MVSN, on the collar; during a transitional period such 'left-overs' were natural. The foreground man has the rank chevrons of *milite scelto;* the helmet stencil could be either a GNR or MVSN badge. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

A posed photograph of a GNR mortar team shows the mixture of uniforms worn by these volunteers. The man in the centre has a camouflage jacket made out of M1929 tent-quarter material, while the other two wear windproof jackets in a pale material. All wear M1933 steel helmets, and black leather leggings as worn by the mounted branches of the pre-Armistice Royal Army. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

three pouches were carried instead of the standard six; a belt buckle with the new RSI Army symbol (see below) was issued in place of the German type. Other soldiers were re-issued with their old Italian firearms and were accordingly given the grey-green leather equipment used pre-1943.

ENR insignia

With the setting up of the new Italian Social Republic all insignia bearing the royal crown were removed from soldiers' uniforms. Soldiers of the four divisions returning from Germany wore the new collar insignia (see below), but retained their pre-Armistice rank badges. They also wore a new badge denoting that they had been trained in Germany: a pair of crossed swords with a swastika in the centre over a fasces. This badge came in two finishes, silvered metal for soldiers and NCOs and gold for officers; both were worn above the right breast pocket of the jacket.

The ENR's **collar insignia** were usually in the form of either a three-pointed or single-pointed cloth 'flame' in branch-of-service colours. Set on the flame, in place of the pre-Armistice white metal star of Savoy, was the RSI symbol of a Roman *gladio* sword upright across a laurel wreath. The colours of the flames were as follows:

Three-pointed flames Red – Infantry; green – Alpini; white – Cavalry; brown – Chemical Troops; crimson – Bersaglieri; blue – Armoured; orange yellow – Artillery; bottle green – Motor Transport; black with crimson border – Engineers.

Single-pointed flames Red – Sanitary Corps; purple – Commissary Corps; dark blue – Supply Corps; blue – Veterinary Corps; black with blue border – Administrative Corps; black with yellow border – Legal Service.

General officers had new three-pointed flame collar patches which were very ornate, with a silver spun background with gold braid and red

A unit of GNR militiamen dressed in the summer version of their uniform march past an enthusiastic crowd in Milan, 1944. All are dressed in the tropical M1941 light khaki collarless paratrooper's tunic with light khaki shorts. Baggy black berets are worn here, but the MVSN fez was also widely seen with summer uniform (see Plate C1). The first rank of the column are armed with either Breda M1930 light machine guns or M1938A sub-machine guns; all the other militiamen carry the Carcano carbine with folding bayonet. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

piping around the edges, and a gold sword and laurel wreath symbol on a red background in the centre of the leading edge of the patch. A second pattern with gold background and edged in blue with a silver sword and wreath was introduced but, as with many RSI insignia, it is doubtful that this type ever saw service. Staff officers had a similar collar flame with gold spun background, black and gold edging, and a silver sword and wreath on a black background.

New **ranks** for the ENR were introduced in September 1944 and were in use for less than a year before the fall of the 'Salo Republic'. From private up to sergeant-major the ranks were shown by sleeve chevrons, from warrant officer up to Marshal of Italy, by shoulder boards (see insignia chart on page 19).

The new army **flag** was the usual national tricolour but with a centre motif of an eagle with outstretched wings clutching a gold fasces in its claws; this replaced the royal coat of arms. At a ceremony in Germany in June 1944, Mussolini handed over a new flag to the soldiers of the four divisions who were still undergoing training there.

Another GNR mortar crew posed during training; all three wear M1940 grey-green wool tunics and pantaloons and M1933 helmets. The loader has a stencilled GNR badge on the front of his helmet; and both he and the man holding the next bomb have the new pattern double 'Ms' on their collars. The man at left still has the old MVSN fasces on his black double-flame collar insignia. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana (GNR)

The Republican National Guard was formed in December 1943 as a new Fascist militia to replace the MVSN. Volunteers came from the old Royal Army, branches such as the Carabinieri and PAI, and from among former members of the MVSN who remained loyal to Mussolini. The GNR was to act as the internal police of the new state, and reached a strength of about 80,000 men. Its main task was the fight against partisans, and its units were heavily involved in operations to try to control the ever increasing armed resistance to the Germans and their Italian allies.

As with the MVSN, the GNR had units responsible for protecting specific strategic targets and these included nine Railway, two Harbour, 29 Postal and Telegraphic, five Border and eight Forest Legions – one of which operated against Slovenian partisans, as did five GNR Territorial Defence Battalions.

The GNR incorporated combat units including a parachute battalion and the 'Leonessa' Armoured Group. The latter was in fact one of the largest armoured units fighting for the RSI; it included 35 medium tanks (M13/40), four *semoventi* self-propelled guns, 18 armoured cars (AB41) and 16 tankettes (CV33), as well as small numbers of various scout cars. Apart from the AB41s and *semoventi* these AFVs were obsolete, however; the tankettes were the same model which had been destroyed in great number in the fighting in Libya as long ago as 1940.

GNR uniforms

As with all other RSI organisations it is hard to generalise, but the two most common tunics worn by the GNR in **winter** were the M1940 grey-green wool Army model, and the grey-green wool M1941 collarless jacket as worn by paratroopers. Trousers were either the old Italian Army pantaloons worn with puttees or the long, loose-cut M1941 wool paratrooper's model. Headgear varied, but the M1933 steel helmet was in common use and usually carried stencils of various insignia. This practice had been abandoned in the Army during the early part of the war. Other headgear included the M1942 *bustina* in either grey-green or black wool; again, the badges varied from unit to unit or even from man to man. One unusual uniform worn only by a single battalion of the GNR was made up of the woollen M1941 collarless jacket and M1941 trousers in a 'rust' colour; from the Italian word for this shade the unit was called the 'Battaglione Ruggine'.

The GNR **summer** uniform appears from photographic evidence to have been in quite widespread use. It was made up of the light khaki tropical version of the M1941 collarless jacket usually worn over the black cotton shirt of the MVSN. Trousers were baggy light khaki tropical types, although shorts of the same colour were also very common. Headgear for summer was either the black felt fez with tassel or a large black beret. Photographs seem to indicate that the fez was slightly longer than the old MVSN pattern.

Marshal Graziani, the senior general of the RSI, reviewing the 3rd Parachute Bn 'Folgore' on a visit to its headquarters in the Western Alps in December 1944. Graziani wears an old Royal Army officer's greatcoat with the new RSI insignia on the collar, and his pre-Armistice general's service dress cap. Maj Edoardo Sala, the CO of the 'Folgore', is wearing a grey-green wool collarless tunic with his rank low on the cuff, as well as on the left side of his beret. On the left forearm of his tunic is the sleeve title 'For the Honour of Italy' (see page 14), which was worn by men who volunteered after the Armistice. On Maj Sala's left breast pocket we can just see the metal German parachute brevet worn by the 150 Italians who had attended a jump course at Freiburg in December 1943. (Guido Rosignoli)

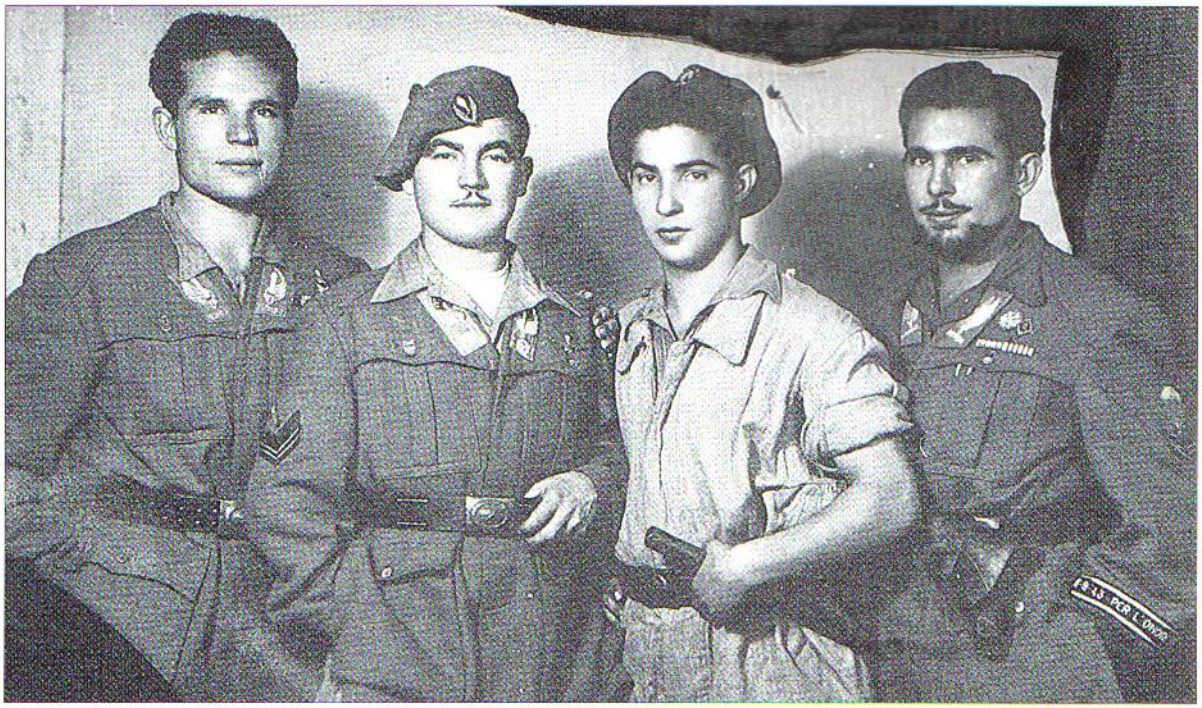
GNR insignia and ranks

Collar insignia began as a version of the red 'M' and fasces type used by the pre-1943 MVSN 'M Battalions'. After a few months the red 'M' was officially dropped and replaced by a stylised double 'M' which looked like two lightning flashes. Insignia for the headgear came in two main designs, the first being a silver skull and crossbones. The second type was a modern-looking design with a fasces in the centre between two 'Ms' formed into wings. This version came in three colours depending on rank: gold for officers, silver for NCOs and red for other ranks.

GNR ranks differed from their MVSN predecessors in many respects, the older organisation's 'Roman' titles being dropped (see insignia chart on page 20).

The Black Brigades

The Brigate Nere or 'Black Brigades' were formed as an armed branch of the RSI's new Fascist Party in June 1944 to supplement the GNR in the fight against the increasing threat of the partisans. All party members between the ages of 18 (officially) and 60 who were not already serving soldiers were eligible to join local units of this Corpo Ausiliario delle Squadre d'Azione delle Camice Nere ('Auxiliary Corps of Blackshirts



Four volunteers of the RSI 'Nembo' Parachute Battalion. Three are wearing the grey-green M1941 tunic, and the man at second right a grey IF41/SP jump smock. The 'collar' patches on the grey-green jackets are blue with the gold and silver sword and gold wing emblem of the paratroopers. On the right-hand man's sleeve can be seen the first pattern cuff title made in winter 1943/44: white '8.9.1943 Per L'Onore D'Italia' on a black band, edged top and bottom with narrow tricolour stripes, red outermost. (Vitetti Archive)

Action Squads'), varying in size from a few hundred to a few thousand men. These units were then formed into 53 larger units termed Black Brigades, each named after a martyr for the Fascist cause (see Table 2).

Their members were mostly 'die-hards' of the old Fascist Party, including both veteran 1920s Squadristi of the generation that had first brought Mussolini to power, and young idealists who had never known any form of government but Fascism. Reaching a total strength of about 30,000 men, the Black Brigades were fanatically loyal. Earlier organisations such as the MVSN militia had included a large number of 'fair weather Fascists' who often joined for opportunistic motives. The hard core who now rallied to the Black Brigades were dedicated to their cause, and their numbers were probably a true reflection of how many people had really supported the old regime wholeheartedly.

The Black Brigades now provided the main anti-partisan forces in many regions, and gained a reputation as brutal fighters. With their backs to the wall and their futures looking increasingly uncertain, they were responsible for many atrocities, and most of them were to pay the ultimate price of defeat.

Black Brigade uniforms

It is difficult to describe a 'typical' Black Brigade uniform since there were so many variations, but certain features were seen in most units. The uniform usually consisted of a black field cap or *'beretto da campagna'* modelled on the German M1943 universal field cap; a black shirt of various patterns; and trousers of either khaki or grey-green, the former being the most common. A short black wool jacket similar to the British battledress blouse was in widespread use among Black Brigade volunteers; this was modelled on the jackets worn by the original Fascisti in the 1920s, and some may have been original garments brought back

OPPOSITE **December 1944: a 47mm anti-tank gun team of an Alpini unit of the RSI. All are wearing camouflage jackets and trousers (cf Plate F1) and the right-hand man retains the felt Alpini hat. Insignia are worn on both sleeve and chest. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)**

Table 2: Black Brigades – territorial units

Bde.no.	Name	Location
1st Brigade	'Ather Capelli'	Torino
2nd Bde	'Attilio Prato'	Alessandria
3rd Bde	'Emilio Picot'	Aosta
4th Bde	'Luigi Viale'	Asti
5th Bde	'Carlo Lidonnici'	Cuneo
6th Bde	'Augusto Cristina'	Novara
7th Bde	'Bruno Ponzecchi'	Vercelli
8th Bde	'Aldo Resega'	Milano
9th Bde	'Leonardo Cortesi'	Bergamo
10th Bde	'Enrico Tognu'	Brescia
11th Bde	'Cesare Rodini'	Como
12th Bde	'Augusto Felisari'	Cremona
13th Bde	'Marcello Turchetti'	Mantova
14th Bde	'Alberto Alfieri'	Pavia
15th Bde	'Sergio Gatti'	Sondrio
16th Bde	'Dante Gervasini'	Varese
17th Bde	'Bartolomeo Azzara'	Venezia
18th Bde	'Luigi Begon'	Padova
19th Bde	'Romolo Gori'	Rovigo
20th Bde	'Piero Cappellini'	Treviso
21st Bde	'Stefano Rizzardi'	Verona
22nd Bde	'Francesco Turcato'	Vicenza
23rd Bde	'Eugenio Facchini'	Bologna
24th Bde	'Igino Ghisellini'	Ferrara
25th Bde	'Arturo Capanni'	Forli
26th Bde	'Mirko Pistoni'	Modena
27th Bde	'Sergio Gavazzoni'	Parma
28th Bde	'Pippo Astorri'	Piacenza
29th Bde	'Ettore Muti'	Ravenna
30th Bde	'Umberto Rosi'	Reggio Emilia
31st Bde	'Silvio Parodi'	Genova
32nd Bde	'Antonio Padoan'	Imperia
33rd Bde	'Tullio Bertoni'	La Spezia
34th Bde	'Giovanni Briatore'	Savona
35th Bde	'Emilio Spinelli'	Arezzo
36th Bde	'Benito Mussolini'	Lucca
37th Bde	'Emilio Tanzi'	Pisa
38th Bde	'Ruy Blas Biagi'	Pistoia
39th Bde	(not known)	Siena
40th Bde	'Vittorio Ricciarelli'	Apuania
41st Bde	'Raffaele Manganiello'	Firenze

Note: There were also eight 'Mobile' Black Brigades and seven 'Independent' Black Brigades, which included a Women's Black Brigade based in Trieste.

into use. Camouflaged smocks, collarless jackets and other parts of Army and GNR uniforms were also used, but were less common than the black shirt and cap. In June 1944 a new, very modern-looking uniform was designed for the Black Brigades in both summer and winter versions, but in the chaos of the time it never came into service.

Uniform regulations for the Black Brigades called only for the men to wear a black shirt with red fasces on the collar and a small enamel party badge. All other insignia were designed and issued for individual brigades, leading to a large number of variations. Given the desperate circumstances of the Fascist forces in 1944/45 it seems absurd that time and effort were devoted to the production of so many new badges; but symbolism and imagery had always been important to the Fascist Party, and now its die-hard members were determined to display their allegiances. With nothing to lose, they adopted uniforms that mirrored those worn by the first Squadristi, with all the theatrical touches which followed from that.

One common feature of most Black Brigade uniforms was a unit name badge worn over the left breast pocket. These were generally rectangular, red over black, divided diagonally, with 'Brigata Nere' in silver on the red enamel and the name of the brigade – e.g. 'Dante Gervasini' – on the black.

The higher ranks in the Black Brigades were marked by a series of cord lanyards worn looped around the right arm, as follows: Squad Commander – red; Platoon Commander – silver and red; Company Commander – silver; Deputy Commanding Officer – gold and silver; and Commanding Officer – gold.

When the new uniform was designed for the Black Brigades in June 1944 a new rank system based on command appointments was supposed to be introduced. These ranks were to be worn on the shoulder straps of the shirt and were made up of a series of gold stripes. Since the new uniform never appeared the new ranks were ignored, and the brigades continued to use the simpler system until the end of the war.

Other RSI Forces:

Paratroopers

A number of small units of paratroopers were formed under the RSI, and these elite troops were to fight well for the Fascists. Paratroop units were formed by the Army, Air Force and GNR, and

29 March 1945: just a month before the collapse of the RSI and the German forces in Italy, Marshal Graziani inspects the Army Group Liguria – the postwar Italian government sentenced him to 19 years' imprisonment for collaboration. He wears a grey-green M1934 officer's greatcoat with his rank of Marshal of Italy on his sleeve, and the four gold stars on a silver patch on the left side of his darker field cap; the RSI forces' *gladio* and laurel wreath badge is pinned to the collar points. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

were part of the organisation of the X[a] MAS (see below) which was officially a naval organisation. The ENR raised the 'Nembo' Autonomous Battalion; only some 350 strong, this unit suffered 70 per cent losses fighting on the Anzio front. A three-battalion 'Folgore' Parachute Regt – perpetuating the name of the first parachute division, wiped out in Africa – was raised by the Air Force and was eventually brought together with other units into an Arditi Parachute Group, which was still in the process of formation when the war ended. Another small parachute unit formed by the GNR was named after a murdered Fascist officer; this 'Mazzarini' GNR Parachute Bn had a strength of some 300 men, and from August 1944 to the end of the war performed anti-partisan duties in the area of the Padovana Plains.

The largest parachute unit in the RSI's forces was formed under the banner of the X[a] MAS and was named the Battaglione Nuotatori Paracadutisti ('Parachutist Swimmers'). This 'NP' battalion was formed from volunteers of the pre-1943 Italian Navy's 'San Marco' Marine Paratroop Bn with an influx of new recruits from other parachute units; it reached an eventual strength of about 1,400 men. Like most other RSI combat units it was largely employed in the anti-partisan role, in this case in the area of the Yugoslavian border where the Communist partisans were particularly strong.

'X[a] MAS'

The X[a] MAS (pronounced 'Decima Mas') was an autonomous unit of the RSI forces raised by the commander of a pre-Armistice Italian Navy special attack unit, the 10[a] Flottiglia Motoscafo Anti-Sommergibile ('10th Anti-Submarine Motorboat Flotilla'), Prince Julio Valerio Borghese. On

Parma, November 1944: men of the Noutatori Paracadutisti parachute battalion of the X[a] MAS Division on parade with their unit flag. Most are wearing camouflaged smocks or ponchos made out of the M1929 tent-quarter. Under these they all wear the M1941 paratrooper-style uniform. The unit shield is worn on the left sleeve; and this particular unit had red collar patches up to July 1944, changed to blue thereafter. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

hearing of the Italian surrender he immediately offered his services to the Germans and began recruiting volunteers for a new unit, which retained the old title although its role was now transformed. This autonomous command was eventually to reach divisional strength, and because it was nominally under command of the RSI's navy it managed to remain independent of both the ENR and the Germans. By April 1944 the X[a] MAS was more than 25,000 strong. It continued to operate against partisans until the end of the war, and gained a reputation as a hard-fighting unit. It also earned the grudging admiration of Allied forces, who regarded it as well trained and highly motivated.

Men of the 'Valanga' Mountain Assault Engineer Bn of the X[a] MAS Division on patrol in the mountains of northern Italy; all are armed with the Beretta M1938A. This special unit is made up of Alpini, as can be seen from the crow's feathers attached to their M1933 helmets. They are all wearing two-piece camouflaged suits (see Plate F1) and – unusually – the old two-pocket black leather bandolier. The officer in the foreground has a rank tab on his left breast – the single stripe and curl of the most junior grade, *sottotenente*. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

ORDER OF BATTLE, JANUARY 1945
'X[a] MAS' MARINE DIVISION

1st Combat Group
'Barbarigo' Battalion
'Lupo' Bn
'Nuotatori Paracadutisti' Para Bn
'Colleoni' Artillery Bn
'Freccia' Engineer Bn – 1st Co

2nd Combat Group
'Valanga' Assault Engineer Bn
'Sagittario' Bn
'Freccia' Bn
'Fulmine' Bn
'Castagnacci' Recruits Bn
'Da Giussano' Artillery Bn
'Freccia' Engineer Bn – 2nd & 3rd Cos

There were also a number of non-divisional X[a] MAS units, totalling eight battalions plus five companies of infantry, as well as a Women's Auxiliary Service. A number of naval units also came under the umbrella of the X[a]MAS, including assault swimmers and other underwater attack personnel.

The most popular **uniform** worn by the X[a] MAS volunteers was the M1941 collarless wool tunic and loose trousers as worn before 1943 by Italian paratroopers (see Plate E1). All ranks wore a blue-painted metal shield on the left sleeve; this featured a large red 'X' or 'X[a]' below a skull with a rose in its teeth, above a yellow legend – initially 'X Flottiglia MAS' and later 'X[a] Divisione'. The design of the badge differed slightly from unit to unit but all were basically similar. Each battalion of the division had its own individual badge, usually worn above the left breast pocket. Collar patches were in different colours, and bore upper symbols, depending on the unit's role: Assault Bns – white, with anchor; Artillery – yellow, with anchor; Infantry – initially red, later blue, with Lion of St Mark; and Autonomous Bns – blue, with anchor. The RSI wreathed sword was worn at the bottom of all patches.

January 1945: Prince Borghese, commander of the 'X^a MAS' autonomous units, addresses some of his men across a line of M1937 machine guns. All wear the M1941 grey-green collarless paratrooper jacket and baggy trousers; and reflected light picks out the metal left sleeve shield of the division. On the lapels battalions wore collar patches which varied in colour and emblems – see Plate E1. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

Headgear was either a grey-green wool beret with gold anchor badge, or the M1933 steel helmet with a stencilled anchor on the front. Some units sported other 'decals' on the helmet; these included a version of the arm shield, or simply 'X^a Mas' stencilled in red.

The Italian Waffen-SS

The Germans began recruiting Italian volunteers for the Waffen-SS as soon as they had re-installed Mussolini in power. Partly inspired by a call from a Bersaglieri veteran of the Russian Front, Maj Fortunato, some 15,000 had come forward by the end of 1943. From among these a regiment of 2,950 Italian volunteers under 66 German officers and 350 German NCOs was raised in October/November 1943. The unit was trained at Munsingen in southern Germany, and returned to Italy in January 1944 to take up anti-partisan duties.

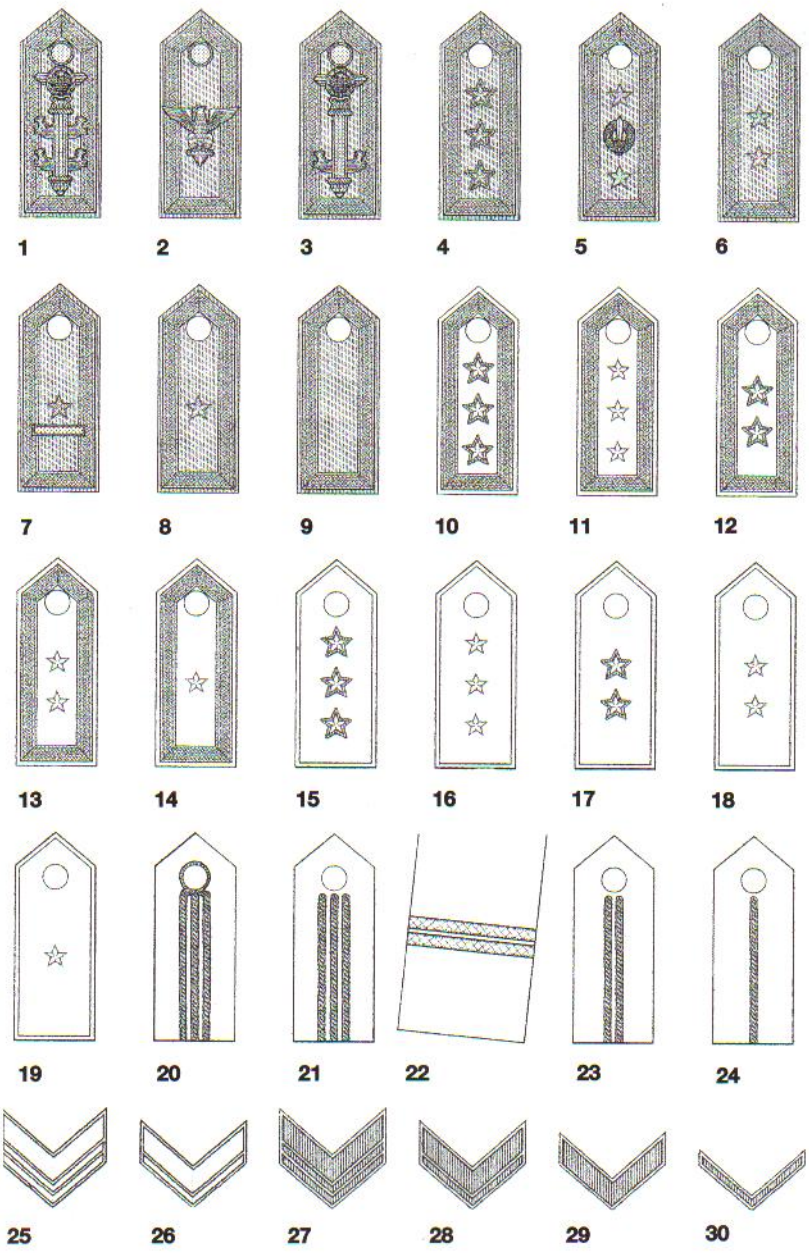
Different initial titles are quoted, all of which may have been used in different sources at different dates: in German, 1.Italienische Freiwilligen-Verband ('1st Italian Volunteer Unit'); 1.Sturmbrigade Italiensiche Freiw.-Legion ('1st Assault Bde, Italian Volunteer Legion'); in Italian, 1a Brigata d'Assalto della Legione SS Italiana; or in a mixture of both languages, 1.Italiensiche Freiw.Sturmbrigade Milizia Armata. From September 1944 the unit was expanded to weak divisional strength (with some 6,000 men) and officially retitled 29.Waffen–Grenadier Division der SS (Italienische Nr.1).

Some of its units fought on the Anzio front in May 1944, apparently performing well. Its main role was anti-partisan warfare, however, and it was to continue with this task until its main combat units surrendered to US forces in late April/early May 1945. Any member of the division who

(continued on page 21)

Rank insignia, National Republican Army (Esercito Nazionale Repubblicano) 1 Sept 1944 – 29 April 1945

Colours: (1-3) General officers, *ufficiali generali*; silver braid shoulder boards, gold wire border, piped scarlet; gold eagle, pillar, crown, stylised ship's prows, buttons; (2) silver metal eagle. **(4-8)** General officers, *ufficiali generali,* and acting brigadiers **(9)**; silver braid shoulder boards, gold braid border, piped brick red, gold wire stars, on brick red backing (4); silver sword, gold hilt & wreath (5); gold bar piped brick red (7). **(10-14)** Field officers, *ufficiali superiori*; grey-green shoulder straps & buttons, gold wire border piped in branch colour, silver braid stars, on brick red backing (10, 12). **(15-19)** Subaltern officers, *ufficiali inferiori*; grey-green shoulder straps & buttons, branch-colour piping, silver braid stars, on brick red backing (15, 17). **(20-24)** Senior NCOs, *sottufficiali-marescialli;* grey-green shoulder straps & buttons, gold wire braid with black silk centre stripes; silver braid cuff rings (22). **(25, 26)** Junior NCOs, *suttofficiali-sergenti*; on upper sleeves yellow wool chevrons, grey-green backing; grey-green shoulder straps & buttons. **(27-30)** Senior other ranks, *graduati*; on upper sleeves red wool chevrons, grey-green backing; grey-green shoulder straps & buttons. Private, *soldato*, wore no insignia. Since there were more separate grades than in the British Army the equivalent NCO ranks shown in brackets are very approximate.



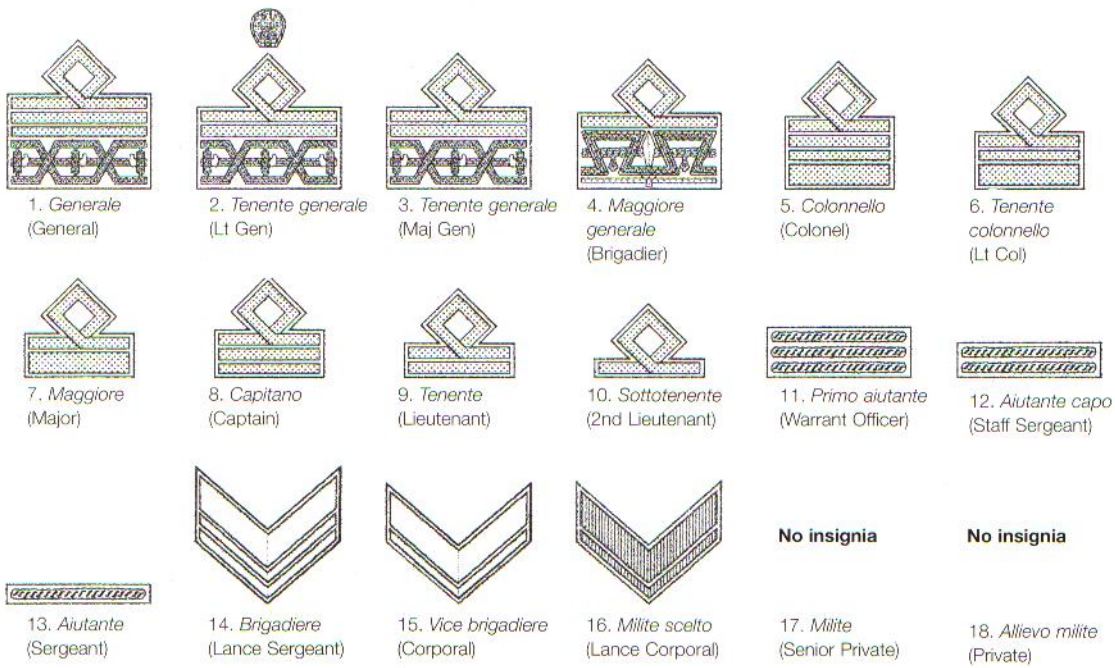
1. *Maresciallo dell'Impero* (Field Marshal)
2. *Maresciallo d'Italia* (Field Marshal)
3. *Maresciallo d'Italia* (Field Marshal)
4. *Generale d'armata* (General)
5. *Generale di corpo d'armata* (Lt Gen)
6. *Generale di divisione* (Maj Gen)
7. *Generale di brigata igs* (Acting Maj Gen)
8. *Generale di brigata* (Brigadier)
9. *Colonnello igs* (Acting Brig)
10. *Colonnello comandante di corpo* (Colonel)
11. *Colonnello* (Colonel)
12. *Tenente colonnello igs* (Acting Colonel)
13. *Tenente colonnello* (Lt Col)
14. *Maggiore* (Major)
15. *Capitano igs* (Captain)
16. *Capitano* (Captain)
17. *Tenente igs* (Lieutenant)
18. *Tenente* (Lieutenant)
19. *Sottotenente* (2nd Lieutenant)
20. *Aiutante di battaglia* (WOI)
21. *Maresciallo maggiore* (WOII)
22. *Maresciallo di compania* (Company Sergeant Major)
23. *Maresciallo capo* (Staff Sergeant)
24. *Maresciallo ordinario* (Sergeant)
25. *Sergente maggiore* (Lance Sergeant)
26. *Sergente* (Corporal)
27. *Caporale maggiore* (Senior Lance Corporal)
28. *Caporale* (Lance Corporal)
29. *Appuntato* (Senior Private)
30. *Soldato scelto* (Senior Private)

Notes: 1.Rank created for Mussolini but never held by him. 2.Rank held only by Graziani, 1944–45. 3.Rank held only by Graziani, 1945. 7.'igs' = *incaricato con grado superiore* – appointed to a higher command, here Brig commanding a division. 9.Col commanding a brigade. 10.Col commanding a regiment. 12.Lt Col commanding a regiment. 15.Capt comanding a battalion. 17.Lt commanding a company. 20.Rank to reward bravery in field by men whose lack of education prevented promotion to commissioned rank. 22.Could be worn by any senior or junior NCO. 29.Rank in cavalry only.

'Black Brigade' officers and men wearing the same basic uniform of black cotton shirt and light khaki trousers with black *beretto da campagna* field caps (cf Plate D2). All have red fasces badges on the cap front; these came in several designs. The men in the rear are armed with two models of Beretta sub-machine gun, M1938A and M1938/43, while the boy in the foreground has a Carcano carbine.

Rank insignia, Republican National Guard (Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana) 1 May 1944 – 4 March 1945

Officers and senior NCOs wore insignia on both cuffs, junior NCOs and senior other ranks on both upper sleeves. **Colours: (1-4)** General officers, *ufficiali generali*; gold wire embroidered *greca* with gold fasces, narrow gold bars & diamond on grey-green backing; gold wire embroidered eagle on brick red backing (2). **(5-7)** Field officers, *ufficiali superiori*; short gold wire broad and narrow bars & diamond on grey-green backing. **(8-10)** Subaltern officers, *ufficiali inferiori*; short gold wire narrow bars & diamond on grey-green backing. **(11-13)** Senior NCOs, *aiutanti;* short silver wire bars with black threads on grey-green backing. **(14-16)** Junior NCOs and senior other ranks, *brigadieri e militi scelti*; silver wire (14, 15) or red wool (16) chevrons on grey-green backing. **(17, 18)** Junior other ranks, *militi*, wore no insignia. Since there were more separate grades than in the British Army the equivalent NCO ranks shown in brackets are very approximate.



1. *Generale* (General)
2. *Tenente generale* (Lt Gen)
3. *Tenente generale* (Maj Gen)
4. *Maggiore generale* (Brigadier)
5. *Colonnello* (Colonel)
6. *Tenente colonnello* (Lt Col)
7. *Maggiore* (Major)
8. *Capitano* (Captain)
9. *Tenente* (Lieutenant)
10. *Sottotenente* (2nd Lieutenant)
11. *Primo aiutante* (Warrant Officer)
12. *Aiutante capo* (Staff Sergeant)
13. *Aiutante* (Sergeant)
14. *Brigadiere* (Lance Sergeant)
15. *Vice brigadiere* (Corporal)
16. *Milite scelto* (Lance Corporal)
17. *Milite* (Senior Private) — **No insignia**
18. *Allievo milite* (Private) — **No insignia**

Notes: 1.Rank intended for the Commandant General, *comandante generale della GNR*, but never awarded. 2.Insignia worn by Renato Ricci, Commandant General 8 Dec 1943–19 Aug 1944. Mussolini was Commandant General 19 Aug 1944–29 April 1945 but never wore rank insignia. 4.Design prescribed but never approved and probably never manufactured. 17.Lowest rank of trained soldier. 18.Recruit.

fell into partisan hands was usually executed, and few of the volunteers were to survive the war.

ORDER OF BATTLE
29.WAFFEN-GRENADIER DIVISION DER SS
(Italienische Nr.1)

The following unit titles are recorded, but seem to include both pre- and post-September 1944 styles; the latter are in the normal W-SS sequence, but the former continued in use internally, and it is difficult to match up the two lists. In 1945 the surrender of a unit named 'Vendetta' to US forces is recorded.

Officers' Battalion
'Debica' Fusilier Bn
Reserve Bn
Anti-tank Bn

81.Waffen-Grenadier Regt der SS
82.W-Gren Regt der SS
29.SS Artillerie-Regt
HQ, administration, supply, medical, engineer and signals companies

The Italian Waffen-SS units wore Italian pre-1943 **uniforms** of both continental and tropical patterns, with the addition of Waffen-SS insignia and ranks. Originally both the SS collar insignia and the left sleeve eagle were worked on red backing, but the normal black was substituted on Himmler's orders after 15 June 1944, in recognition of

February 1944: men of the 'Barbarigo' Bn of the 'Decima Mas' march through Rome on their way to the Anzio front – see Plate E1. All wear the grey-green collarless M1941 paratrooper-style uniform popular with the RSI forces. On the lapels are the red patches of this battalion, with Lion of St Mark and wreathed sword emblems. Note the triple magazine belt pouches for the M1938A sub-machine gun. (Rudy D'Angelo)

ABOVE **November 1944: SS-Sturmbannführer Luis Thaler in discussion with Waffen-Obersturmbannführer Armando Biorleo of the Italian Waffen-SS. Biorleo wears the grey-green wool tunic of the Italian Army with SS rank added to the collar, still on the early style red background despite Himmler's order substituting black from June 1944. The original uncropped picture shows LtCol Biorleo's bright silver shoulder cords of rank on Waffen-SS style double underlay, in German infantry white over red. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)**

November 1944: a column of Italian Waffen-SS troops dressed in a mixture of grey-green wool Italian tunics; the man at the front wears a M1940 tunic and the others the M1941 collarless type. Their trousers are all the grey-green pantaloons worn with puttees. Over this uniform most have camouflaged M1929 tent-quarters folded as ponchos, although the second man appears to be wearing the plain khaki version (see Plate E3). The small arms are all Italian – M1938A SMGs and Carcano carbines. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

good service on the Nettuno front at Anzio (German officers and NCOs wore the standard SS designs and colours from the start). The volunteers' right-hand patch initially bore a silver (officers) or white fasces; after June 1944 the fasces, the SS 'lightning' runes, and a plain black patch have all been illustrated. The usual SS rank insignia were worn on the left patch. The left sleeve of the tunic normally bore an eagle, combining elements of both SS and Fascist designs, clutching a fasces horizontally in its claws; this was made on both red and black backings. A white metal version worn as the upper cap badge by officers has been illustrated; the standard SS death's-head was the lower cap badge.

Headgear included the M1933 Italian steel helmet painted grey-green, either plain or bearing two shield decals: on the left side, a white shield with the SS runes in black, and on the right an Italian tricolour shield. A field cap was also worn, of the same shape as the Italian Army tropical M1942 visored *bustina* but made of grey-green wool. Before other types could be issued the M1935 grey-green wool *bustina* was also worn but would have been discarded as soon as possible. Some men wore a version of the German M1943 universal field cap made out of various shades of grey material with the Waffen-SS eagle and death's-head badges worn in various positions.

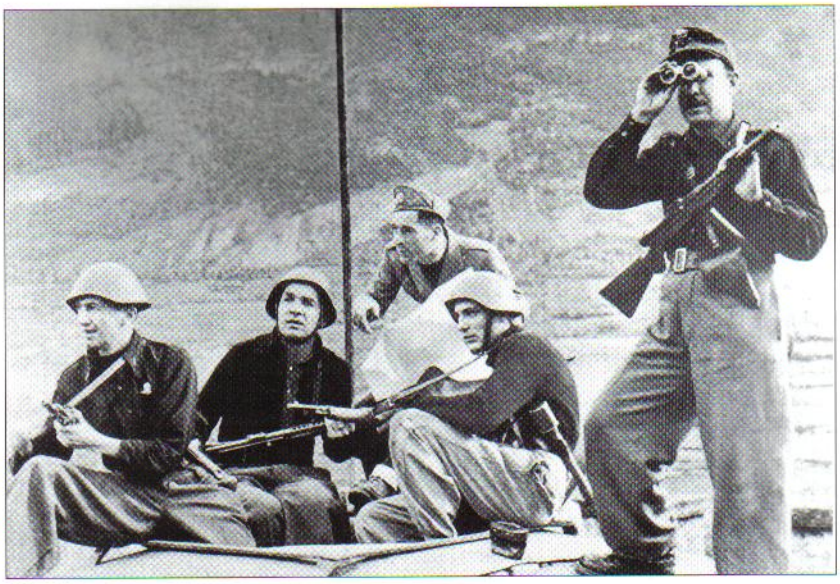
Other RSI units

A large number of small autonomous units were raised by the RSI regime during its short life, and these are too numerous to mention here. A few examples include:

The Ispettorato Speciale Polizia Antipartigiana (ISPA), a special anti-partisan police unit.

The Fiamme Bianche ('White Flames'), formed from boys who were members of the Fascist youth movement.

The Sardegna Volunteers Battalion, a 500-man unit which operated in the north-east of Italy near the Yugoslavian border.

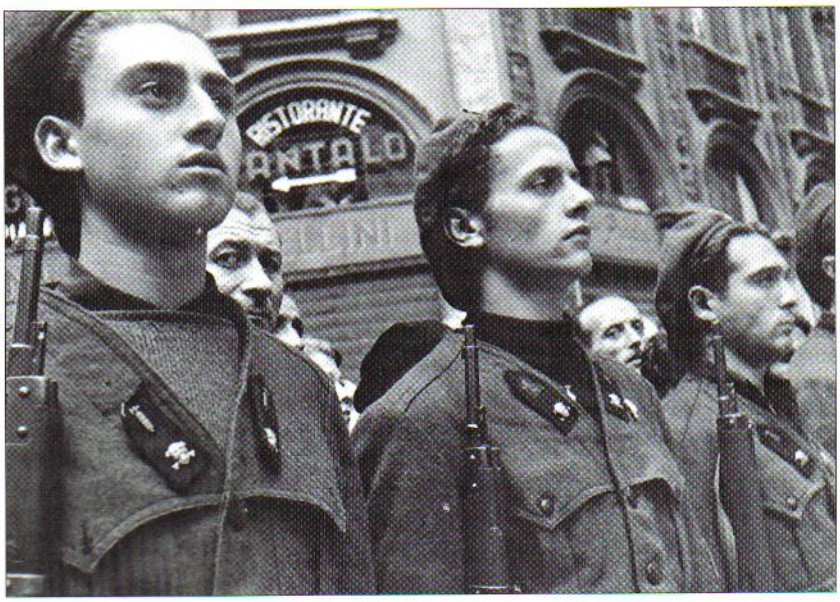


'Brigate Nere' volunteers on patrol in Valdossola, Novara, in 1944 wearing an interesting mix of uniforms. These include black shirts and pullovers worn with khaki trousers, and in the case of the officer in the background, the grey-green M1940 Army tunic. Headgear includes 'war booty' Greek Army helmets, a grey-green *bustina* and a black field cap. Their insignia, worn either on the caps or shirts, is a silver skull and dagger. Such badges came in various designs; under magnification that on the field cap at right can be identified as an original Fascist example used first by the Blackshirts in 1921 and worn by some loyalists until 1945. (Alessandro Raspagni)

The Moschettieri delle Alpi ('Alpine Rifles') Battalion is recorded with only 242 men; it operated in the Aosta region and was made up of ex-Alpini.

The Cacciatori degli Appennini ('Appennine Hunters') was a major anti-partisan unit with three regiments, which is reported to have reached a strength of 10,000 men.

Women were recruited into all the various forces of the RSI including the Army, Decima MAS, GNR and Black Brigades. The main organisation was the Female Volunteer Corps for Republican Armed Forces Auxiliary Services (SAF for short). The SAF performed many support roles such as working in military hospitals and offices. They had a winter uniform of grey-green jacket, skirt and beret, and a similar summer version in light khaki.



Milan, 29 October 1944: excellent view of the M1941 grey-green collarless tunic, worn by men of the 'Ettore Muti' Autonomous Mobile Legion of the Police on parade – see Plate D3. This unit was expanded from an Action Squad of the Black Brigades into a special anti-partisan unit with a strength of about 1,600 men. Note the black lapel patches bearing a red fasces above a silver skull and crossbones emblem. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

ABOVE **Though blurred, this photo of two Black Brigade 'Arditi' volunteers does show useful details – most strikingly, large white skull-and-dagger badges painted on the M1933 helmet. Both men wear the collarless tunic with black lapel patches bearing – in this case – red fasces below small silver skull emblems. The foreground man wears the ribbon of the 1940–43 War Medal; the background figure wears on his left breast pocket the tricolour shield of the Black Brigades, with the name of his legion around the sides and a gold fasces in the centre. (Alessandro Raspagni)**

The under-exposure of this print of Black Brigade volunteers at least makes the skull and crossbones badge stand out against the black field cap. The khaki windproof jackets retain – unusually – the white metal collar stars of the Royal Army. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)

THE CO-BELLIGERENT FORCES – 'THE ARMY OF THE SOUTH'

At the end of September 1943 the first moves were made by the Badoglio government in southern Italy to form units to fight on the Allied side. Royal Army order 70/V called for the formation of the 1° Raggruppamento Motorizzato, which was built from the remains of two old divisions, the 'Legnano' and 'Messina'. This hastily assembled group was sent to fight in November 1943 in the battle to take Monte Lungo, where it suffered heavy losses but performed well enough to persuade the Allies that it would be worth expanding the 'Italian Co-Belligerent Forces'.

The next step was to form the Corpo Italiano di Liberazione (CIL, 'Italian Liberation Corps'). This sizeable force of some 22,000 men, almost entirely equipped with Italian arms and matériel, was organised in two divisions: the 'Nembo' – formed around a core from the former parachute division of that name; and the 'Utili' – formed from the 1° Raggruppamento Motorizzato and named after its commander, Gen Umberto Utili. In early 1944 a 5,000-man force of Italians fought on the Gustav Line around Monte Cassino, acquitting itself well and suffering heavy casualties.

After only four months of existence the CIL had outgrown itself, and was used in autumn 1944 as the nucleus for six Gruppi di Combattimento. These 'Combat Groups' were weak divisions, each with two infantry and one artillery regiments plus support and service units; the establishment was 432 officers and 8,578 other ranks, 116 field guns, 170 mortars, 502 light machine guns and 1,277 motor vehicles. Combat Groups were given old

(continued on page 33)

DEFENCE OF SICILY, JULY/AUGUST 1943

1: Soldato, 'Livorno' Light Infantry Division

2: Capo manipolo, 22nd MVSN Anti-Aircraft Legion

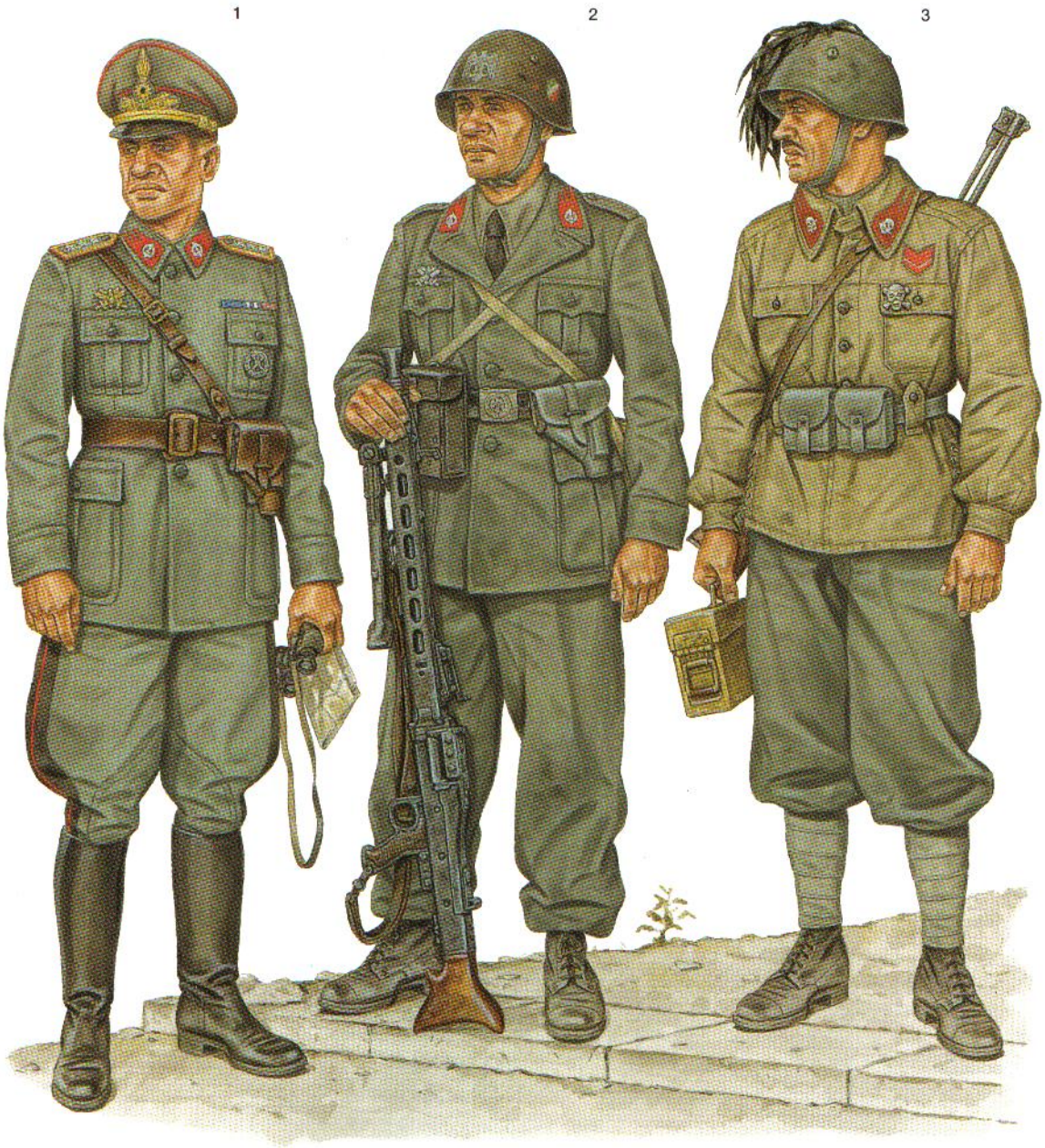
3: Sergente, 206th Coastal Division

RSI – REGULAR ARMY (ENR)

1: Colonnello, infantry, 1945

2: Soldato, 2nd 'Littorio' Inf Div, 1944

3: Caporale, 1st Bersaglieri Bn 'B.Mussolini', 1944

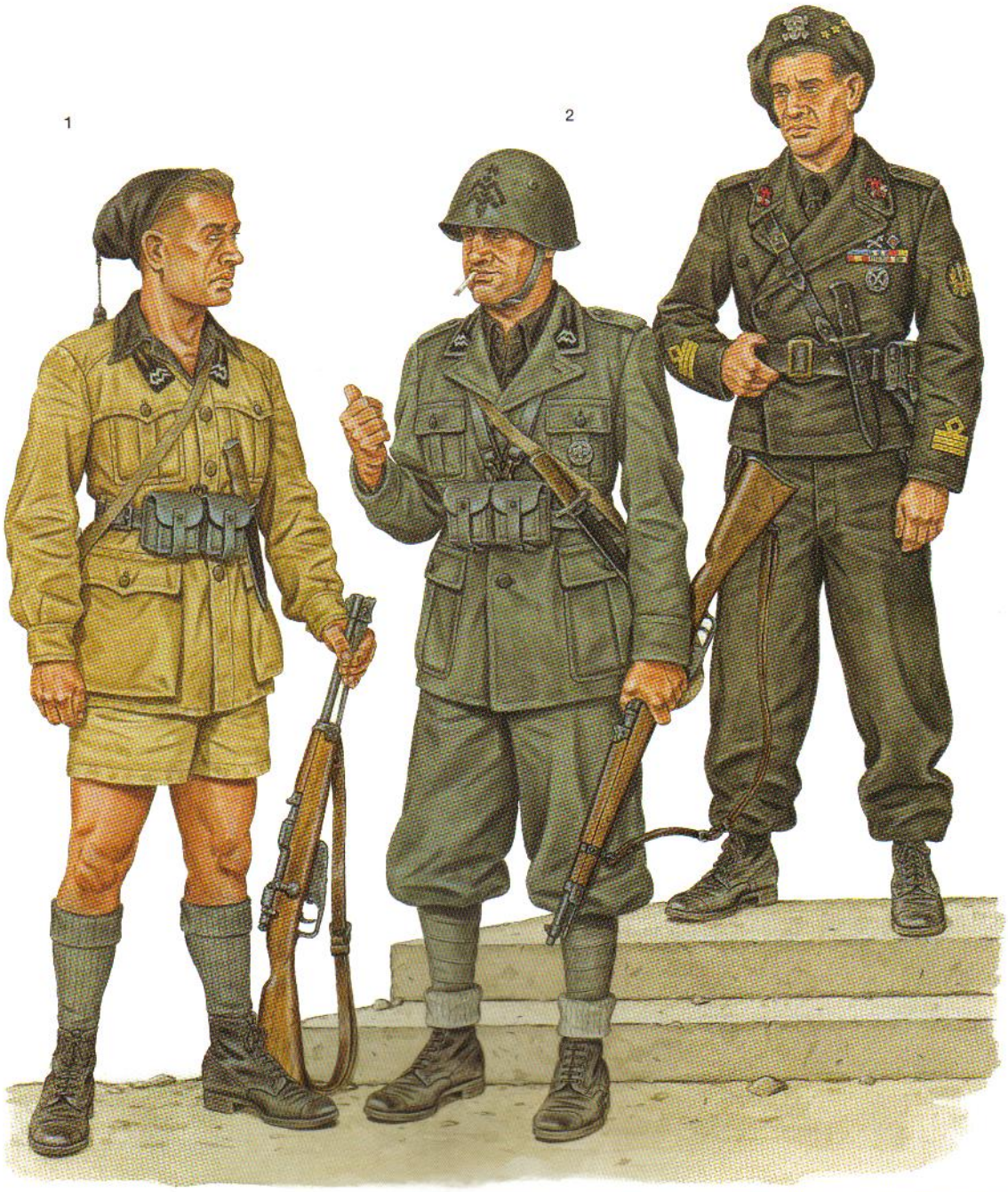


RSI – REPUBLICAN NATIONAL GUARD (GNR)

1: Milite, Milan, 1944

2: Milite, 1944

3: Capitano, 'Leonessa' Armoured Group; Milan, 1944



C

RSI – ANTI-PARTISAN FORCES

1: Volunteer, 'Fiamme Bianche' Youth Battalion

2: Volunteer, 8th Black Brigade 'Aldo Resega'

3: Sergente, Autonomous Mobile Legion 'Ettore Muti'

RSI – AUTONOMOUS UNITS & WAFFEN-SS

1: Volunteer, 'Barbarigo' Bn, 'X^a MAS' Div, 1944

2: Soldato, 'Nembo' Autonomous Parachute Bn, 1944

3: W-Rottenführer, 'Debica' Fusilier Bn, 29.Waffen-Grenadier Div der SS, 1945

RSI FORCES & ARMY OF THE SOUTH, 1944–45

1: Volunteer, 'X^{a} MAS' Division

2: Sergente, 'Gioto' Bersaglieri Bn, 'Legnano' Combat Group

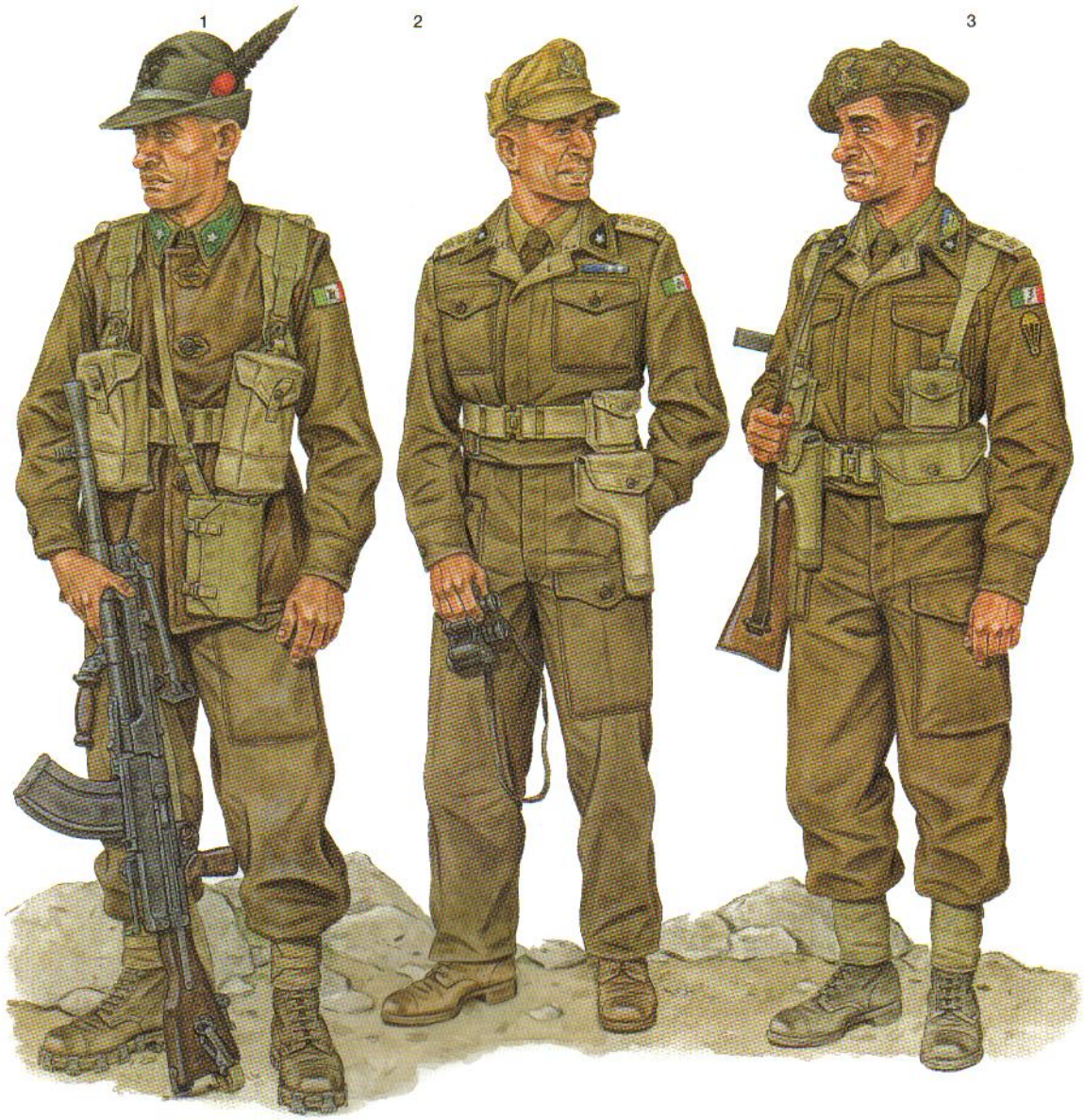
3: Soldato, 114th Inf Regt, 'Mantova' Combat Gp

ARMY OF THE SOUTH, 1944–45

1: Soldato, 'Aquila' Alpini Bn, 'Legnano' Combat Gp

2: Capitano, 35th Artillery Regt, 'Friuli' Combat Gp

3: Tenente, 184th Parachute Artillery Regt, 'Folgore' Combat Group



PARTISAN FORCES, 1943-45

1: Battalion commander, Ossola Valley partisans, 1944

2: Communist partisan, 26th 'Garibaldi' Brigade, 1945

3: Partisan, 'Osoppo' Bde, partisan Republic of Carnia, 1944

divisional titles, and the numbers of their component regiments to some extent followed those of the pre-Armistice divisions of the same names.

ORDER OF BATTLE
COMBAT GROUPS

'Cremona'
21st & 22nd Inf Regts,
Service Group
'Legnano'
68th Inf Regt,
Special Inf Regt,
11th Arty Regt,
Service Group
'Friuli'
87th & 88th Inf Regts,
35th Arty Regt,
Service Group
'Mantova'
114th & 76th Inf Regts,
155th Arty Regt,
Service Group
'Piceno'
235th & 236th Inf Regts,
152nd Arty Regt,
Service Group
'Folgore'
'Nembo' Para Regt,
'San Marco' Marine Regt,
184th 'Folgore' Arty Regt,
Service Group

Alessandro Pavolini (left), the commander-in-chief of the Black Brigades, inspects a unit. He is wearing the short black blouse-style jacket in widespread use with the Black Brigades and a black *beretto da campagna* field cap. Both officers wear pre-Armistice grey officers' breeches and black leather top boots. The officer at right has the Russian Front badge on his left breast pocket. In the uncropped photo the men on parade all seem to have the M1941 paratrooper-style jacket and trousers and black field caps. (Allessandro Raspagni)

Support units

Many Italians were employed in a support role by the Allied forces in Italy, thus freeing more soldiers for combatant duty. These volunteers included units that were used to unload supplies at the Allied-held ports; these men wore an arm badge of a red circle with the green letters 'TN' in the centre. Another vital contribution to the Allied war effort was provided by the Pack Transport Units, volunteers who led trains of mules carrying ammunition, rations, fuel and other necessities up to the front lines. This form of transport was often the only feasible way to get the necessities forward in the mountainous regions where the Allies spent much of the campaign battering at the German defensive lines, particularly in winter. Casualties were often high, as the German defensive fire tasks often included pre-registered artillery and mortar fire on the few and therefore predictable lines of supply. Soldiers of the Pack Transport Units wore a special uniform: British battledress dyed dark green, with their own headgear – and as many of the men were ex-Alpini these were often Alpine hats.

Uniforms and insignia

The 1° Raggruppamento Motorizzato was dressed mainly in pre-1943 Italian tropical and Sahariana jackets and breeches. The unit's special

insignia was a small red shield with a white cross worn above the left breast pocket; some officers' badges had the shield edged in blue. The Corpo Italiano di Liberazione continued to wear mostly Italian uniforms. A blue enamel shield with a white cross and a black medieval knight was designed to be worn on the left breast pocket by CIL soldiers in June 1944, but does not seem to have been issued before the expansion of the CIL into the Gruppo di Combattimento in the autumn, making its use redundant. A small tricolour ribbon or band was also introduced in April 1944 and was meant to be attached across the shoulder straps of the jacket.

As more Allied gear was supplied to the Army of the South its troops took on an almost completely British appearance. The usual dress from 1944 to 1945 was the British battledress worn with Italian insignia. The latter typically included a rectangular tricolour national flash (red, white and green in equal vertical stripes) at the top of the left sleeve, bearing the distinctive insignia of the Combat Group on the white central stripe in dark blue: 'Cremona' – an ear of wheat; 'Legnano' – a medieval Lombard knight; 'Friuli' – medieval city gates; 'Mantova' – an eagle; 'Piceno' – a Roman arch; and 'Folgore' – a lightning bolt. Sometimes the name of the group was also stitched under the emblem. *Mostrine* worn on the collars were the same as worn in the pre-Armistice army; the white metal star continued to be worn as the Army of the South still owed allegiance to the king.

Headgear included the various types of *bustina* worn by the Italian Royal Army. Higher ranking officers usually wore the cap in *'cordellino'*

Soldiers of the 1° Raggruppamento Motorizzato, the first unit organised to fight on the side of the Allies in 1943. They all wear tropical khaki uniforms with grey-green painted helmets. Note, at left and centre, the 1st Motorised Group's cloth badge of the red shield and white cross of the house of Savoy worn above the left breast pocket. The one clearly visible collar patch in this group seems to be the black with three blue stripes of the old 'Legnano' Division. All these men are armed with the Carcano carbine with folding bayonet. (US National Archives)

LtGen Wladislaw Anders, commanding Polish II Corps in Italy, greets three officers of the 1° Raggrupamento Motorizzato. The infantry lieutenant shaking the general's hand is wearing a tropical Sahariana jacket with the obsolete black shoulder boards which carry his rank, and a tropical *bustina*. The other two Italian officers wear grey-green jacket and *bustina*, with the small unit shield above the left breast pocket. The moustached artillery lieutenant in the centre wears the collar insignia of the old Royal Army's 11th Field Artillery Regt from the 'Mantova' Division – halved green and yellow *mostrine* with the yellow-edged black single flame of the artillery superimposed. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Collection)

material with the Royal Army ranks displayed in the normal way. British khaki wool berets (or the similar 'caps, general service') were worn by parachutists, and black berets by the 'San Marco' Marines. The M1933 helmet painted grey-green was worn with tropical uniform by the 1° Raggruppamento Motorizzato and by other units fighting on the Allied side before regular supplies were obtained from the Allies. Once British battledress was issued the British Mk II steel helmet became the norm, and Bersaglieri and Alpini attached their cockerel and crow feathers (respectively) to the right and left sides.

The **rank insignia** worn by the Co-Belligerent Forces were at first of Royal Army type. In March 1945 a new system was introduced which replaced the cuff ranks of officers with the old pre-Fascist system of wearing them only on the shoulder boards. The ranks were indicated by a system of gold stars: one & two – sub-lieutenant & lieutenant; two and bar – first lieutenant; three – captain; three and bar – first captain; one, two & three within gold border – major, lieutenant-colonel and colonel. General officers' ranks were worn on silver spun cloth backing: one & two gold stars – brigade & divisional general; two with gold crown – army corps general; two with gold crown with bar behind it – general in command of an army; three stars – army general; four stars – marshal of Italy.

Lt Gino Coletti of the 9th Arditi Bn, and Maj Edoardo Di Stefano of the 68th Inf Regt, 'Legnano' Combat Group, examine their unit flag. Both wear British battledress with Italian insignia; the major has the unit flash of the 'Legnano' on his left shoulder, and his rank on both his *bustina* and the cuff band of the battledress blouse. (Private Collection)

Members of an Alpini band of the 'Army of the South' made up of officers play at a parade in a liberated city in early 1945. The officers are all very well turned-out in pre-Armistice uniforms, which often continued in use with the Co-Belligerent Forces. Their officer status is shown by the gold metal feather holders on their Alpini hats, and note the lieutenant's rank chevrons on the left side of the hat. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Collection)

THE PARTISANS

Armed resistance to both the occupying German forces and those of the Italian Social Republic at Salo began shortly after Mussolini's restoration to power. Armed groups were formed by most of the pre-1922 political opponents of the Fascist regime, with the Communists and Socialists in the forefront. The Partisan movement was destined always to be divided by political differences, although united in their hatred of the Germans and Fascists. Partisan groups formed by political parties were as follows:

Socialist Party – 'Matteotti Brigades'
Catholics – 'Peoples' or 'Catholic Brigades'
Republican – 'Mazzini Brigades'
Anarchist – 'Red Flag Units'
Actionist Party – 'Justice and Freedom Brigades'

Other so-called 'autonomous' groups were largely apolitical and were formed on a local basis. These included the 'Osoppo Brigades', which were formed by two Catholic priests and had reached a strength of ten battalions by April 1944. The 'Green Flames' was a unit from Lombardy; there were also the 'Ossola Valley' and 'Aosta Valley' groups. These autonomous or non-aligned groups made up about 20 per cent of the partisan forces, but contributed to the movement's effectiveness out of proportion to their strength.

Officially all partisan groups were supposed to come under the central control of the National Liberation Committee (CLN), formed by the Badoglio government in Naples in an attempt to unify all anti-Fascist parties and to co-ordinate armed opposition to the Germans and Fascists, but in this it failed. Partisan groups in northern Italy resented the Badoglio government and chose to ignore its directives. A rival organisation, the National Liberation Committee for Northern Italy (CLNAI) was set up by the partisans behind German lines and enjoyed the loyalty of most groups in the region.

The Communist 'Garibaldini' Brigades made up 40 per cent of the total partisan forces and were to reach a strength of 575 brigades. By the end of the war they had suffered over 42,000 dead and 18,000 wounded. By May 1944 the number of partisans was about 20,000; but by April 1945 this had expanded to about 200,000. Much of this huge expansion was due to the enlistment of so-called 'summer partisans' – fair-weather opportunists, joining to ensure that they were on the winning side, or even ex-Fascists looking to avoid retribution after the war. Other young men joined the partisans to avoid conscription into the RSI armed forces or being sent to work in Germany as virtual slave labourers.

Sometimes the guerrillas were in control of an area of liberated territory long enough to declare it a 'Partisan Republic'. These 'republics' were sometimes only under partisan control for a few months before German and RSI forces recaptured them. While they lasted, however, they were a thorn in the side of the Germans and Fascists and provided safe havens for escapers and refugees of all kinds. The best known of these enclaves were given grandiose titles, such as the

'Republic of Ossola' near the Swiss border, which covered 1,600 square kilometres and had about 82,000 inhabitants. Others included 'Carnia', on the Slovenian border, 'Montefiornino' in the Modena region, and 'Alba' in south-east Piedmont. By the end of 1944 all these 'republics' had been destroyed by German and RSI offensives, and the partisans had gone underground to continue their guerrilla warfare.

As the Allies advanced in Italy some partisans were attached to Allied formations as auxiliary reconnaissance troops. In December 1944 1,500 partisans were attached to the British 8th Army, and in February 1945 these were joined by five more detachments. These units included the 'Maiella' and 'Boldrini' Brigades, who were issued with British arms and equipment. However, the majority of partisan units were engaged in sabotage and low-level attacks on German and RSI forces. These attacks led to severe reprisals against the civilian population, including the shooting of large numbers of hostages. The Germans now regarded the Italian population as an occupied enemy people, and inflicted on them the same harsh treatment as endured by the rest of Europe for the past four years.

In the spring of 1945, as the Anglo-American armies advanced on the last of Italy's occupied northern cities, the partisan movement came into its own. Urban partisan units known as 'Patriotic Action Groups' began uprisings which tied down the German defenders. On 25 April the CLNAI ordered a general insurrection in the northern cities to prevent the retreating Germans from carrying out a 'scorched earth' policy. Partisans occupied strategic positions and buildings, preventing the Germans from blowing up factories and other important facilities. On 28 April 1945 Benito Mussolini, his mistress Clara Petacci and a number of companions were captured by a partisan group near Lake Como while trying to escape to Switzerland. The next day Mussolini and Petacci were shot; the bodies were taken to Milan, where they were hung upside down outside a garage on the Piazzale Loreto – the scene of a recent hanging of partisans.

A youthful Bren gunner of the 'Army of the South' wears a Mk II British steel helmet with the addition of camouflage netting (cf Plate F2). His British battledress has the blue-striped black collar patches of the 68th Inf Regt, 'Legnano' Gruppo di Combattimento, though he wears no tricolour shoulder flash. (IWM NA21940)

As in most European resistance movements, Italian women played a large part in the anti-Fascist struggle. There are reckoned to have been some 35,000 women present with the various partisan groups; many fought bravely, and over 3,500 of them were killed during the course of the war.

Organisation and weapons

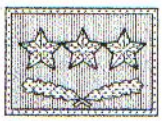
The irregular nature of partisan forces meant that unit sizes varied from group to group, with bands reaching strengths of anything up to 450 men. The size of units depended on the availability of arms and the logistics of feeding, clothing and otherwise supplying the guerrillas, as much as upon the enthusiasm of local volunteers. The basic unit in the partisan movement was the squad; and three to five squads made up a detachment. Three or more detachments formed

a brigade; and various numbers of brigades made up a division. In some cases a number of divisions would form a 'divisional group', which would be responsible for an 'operational zone'.

The Italian partisans were armed with a mixture of captured Axis and air-dropped Allied weapons. Captured firearms included every type of Italian small arms and also a few pieces of German equipment. Sub-machine guns were British Stens and US M3s and UD42s, as well as the ever-popular Italian Beretta models. One unusual home-produced model of SMG used exclusively by the partisans was the 'Variara', produced in small numbers in workshops in northern Italy. Heavier weaponry included Bren light machine guns as well as the usual captured Axis types.

Rank insignia, Corps of Volunteers for Liberty (Corpo Voluntari della Liberta)

These insignia were worn above the left breast pocket. **Colours: (1-4)** Headquarters command; red 9cm x 7cm patch, gold metal stars & leaves, 4mm gold braid outer border. **(5-8)** Regional commands; red 9cm x 7cm patch, silver metal stars, bars & leaves, 4mm silver braid outer border. **(9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21)** Officers; red 9cm x 7cm patch, silver metal stars & bars; (9) silver braid inner border. **(19, 23, 24-26)** Officers; silver metal stars; (19, 23) on red backing. **(10, 12, 14, 17, 22)** Commissars; green 9cm x 7cm patch, silver metal stars & bars; (10) silver braid inner border. **(20)** Commissar; silver metal stars on green backing. **(27, 28)** NCOs; 10mm wide red cloth chevrons.



1. *Comandante generale* (General)

2. *Vice comandante generale* (Lt Gen)

3. *Capo di stato maggiore generale* (Maj Gen)

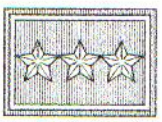
4. *Comandante addetto* (Maj Gen)

5. *Comandante regionale* (Lt Gen)

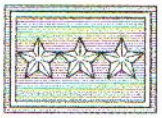
6. *Vice comandante regionale* (Maj Gen)

7. *Capo di stato maggiore regionale* (Brigadier)

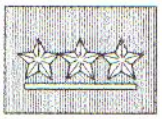
8. *Addetto regionale* (Brigadier)



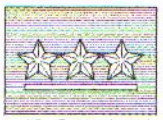
9. *Comandante di zona* (Colonel)



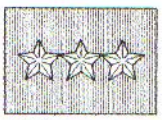
10. *Commissario di zona* (Colonel)



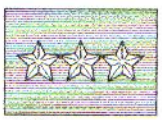
11. *Comandante di divisione* (Lt Col)



12. *Commissario di divisione* (Lt Col)

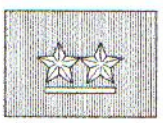


13. *Vice comandante di zona* (Lt Col)

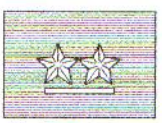


14. *Vice commissario di zona* (Lt Col)

15. *Capo di stato maggiore di zona* (Major)



16. *Vice comandante di divisione* (Major)



17. *Tenente igs* (Lieutenant)

18. *Capo di stato maggiore di divisione* (Captain)

19. *Comandante di brigata* (Captain)

20. *Commissario di brigata* (Captain)

21. *Comandante di battaglione* (Lieutenant)

22. *Commissario di battaglione* (Lieutenant)

23. *Aiutante maggiore di brigata* (Lieutenant)

24. *Ufficiale addetto di brigata* (2nd Lieutenant)

25. *Comandante di distaccamento* (2nd Lieutenant)

26. *Ufficiale addetto ad altri comandi* (2nd Lieutenant)

27. *Capo squadra* (Sergeant)

28. *Capo nucleo* (Corporal)

No insignia

29. *Partigiano* (Private)

Note: British equivalents of the many senior ranks are very approximate.

A group photograph of a partisan unit shows a typical variety of dress and weapons. The men are wearing various jackets and shirts including ex-Italian Army tunics and what seem to be dyed Saharianas. Two officers (centre row, third and fourth from left) wear a pale Sahariana and a jacket made from M1929 camouflaged material; both display the red patch with one star identifying a Detachment Commander over their left breast pockets. The firearms are Carcano carbines and British Sten SMGs; the latter were air-dropped to the partisans in large numbers. (Franco Mesturini Archives)

Uniforms and insignia

Uniforms and insignia of a type were worn by partisan units, but to a great extent these appeared only at the very end of the war or in areas largely controlled by their forces. Uniforms were of course not worn when on covert operations when the partisans needed to merge with the civilian population. Partisan units marching into liberated Italian towns would obviously wear as much in the way of uniform as possible, to underline their legitimacy and advertise their allegiances. Old pre-Armistice and captured German and RSI items were widely worn at all times, mixed with civilian clothing.

Scarves were one distinguishing feature of the partisans, and were basically in three colours: red for the Communists, and green or blue for the non-Communists such as the Catholics or the Osoppo groups. The Communist Garibaldini often had their scarves decorated with various pro-Soviet symbols and slogans, either printed or embroidered. The Corpo Voluntari della Liberta tried to impose some uniformity on all the disparate political groups by ordering that a blue scarf should be worn by all partisans. Predictably, this did not go down well with the Garibaldini, who continued to wear their cherished red scarves. However, some non-Communist groups also wore red scarves, thus adding to the confusion of identifying who was on whose side. Other insignia worn included tricolour cockades and breast patches worn over the left pocket displaying the black letters 'CVL' or 'CLN'.

Partisans of the Ossola Valley on the Italian/Swiss border adopted their own unique uniform made out of brown material and usually worn with an Alpine hat similar to those worn by the Alpini, with eidelweiss

An honour guard of partisans of the 'Boldrini' or 'Gordini' Brigade at the parade at which their commander was presented with the *Medaglio D'Oro* in February 1945. This group were formally attached to, and therefore supplied by, the British 8th Army; all have the khaki British 'cap, GS' with tricolour cockades added, and British battledress – though the girl wears the blouse with her civilian skirt. Reports say that this unit had dark blue shoulder patches with the word 'Partisan' in red stitching; under magnification a dark rectangular patch can be seen at the top of the left sleeves of three of these partisans. The men carry SMLE and No.4 rifles and the girl has a Sten. (IWM NA22065)

badges on the side, as used by the German mountain troops (see Plate H1). Other home-made items of uniform in use with the partisans included versions of the wind jacket which was widely worn by the RSI forces.

Partisan units attached to the Allied forces were given British uniforms and equipment and approached the appearance of regular soldiers. The 'Maiella' Volunteers Corps fought with the Polish II Corps, wearing British battledress and helmet with a simple tricolour collar patch. Another unit kitted out by the Allies was the 'Gordini' or 'Boldrini' Brigade, which wore British battledress and beret-like GS caps with a tricolour cockade on the front, and a dark blue arm badge with the word 'Partisan' in red.

The main system of **ranks** in use by the partisans were those designated by the Corpo Voluntari della Liberta (see chart on page 38). The Communist 'Garibaldini' groups had their own system of rank badges, made up of a sequence of silver stars on red or green patches worn over the left breast pocket; these were restricted to commanders of divisions and battalions.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is by no means comprehensive, but these are the titles consulted during research for all three Men-at-Arms books in this sequence. However, much of my information came from friends who have acquired their knowledge over many years of research in the field.

Official Italian Army Histories

Le Operazioni del Giugno 1940 sulle Alpi Occidentali, V.Gallinari (Western Alps) (1981)

L'Esercito Italiano nella Campagna di Grecia (Greek campaign)
Le Operazioni delle Unita Italiane al Fronte Russo, C.De Francesco & G.De Vecchi (Russian campaign) (1977)
Le Operazioni in Africa Orientale, A.Rovighi (East African campaign) (1988)
Le Operazioni in Africa Settentrionale, Vol 1, Sidi el Barrani (North African campaign, June 1940–Febuary 1941) (1984)
Le Operazioni in Africa Settentrionale, Vol 2, Tobruk (N.Africa March 1941–January 1942) (1985)
Le Operazioni in Africa Settentrionale, Vol 3, El Alamein (N.Africa January–November 1942) (1989)
Le Operazioni in Africa Settentrionale, Vol 4, Enfidaville (N.Africa November 1942–May 1943) (1993)

General titles

Cioci, Antonio, *Il Reggimento 'Giovani Facisti' nella Campagna dell'Africa Settentrionale 1941–43* (1980)
Francesconi, Teodoro, *Le Bande V.A.C. in Dalmazia 1942-43* (1992)
Girlando, Raffaele, *PAI – Polizia Dell'Africa Italiana* (1996)
Greene, Jack, *Mare Nostrum – The War in the Mediterranean* (1990)
Greene, Jack, & Alessandro Massignani, *Rommel's North African Campaign* (1994)
Lundari, Guiseppe, *I Paracadutisti Italiani 1937–45* (1989)
Nafziger, George F., *Italian Order of Battle, World War II (Vols 1, 2 & 3)* (1996)

Uniforms and equipment

Belogi, Ruggero, *Regio Esercito Italiano Uniformi 1933-1940* (1978)
Crociani, Piero, & Andrea Viotti, *Le Uniformi Coloniali Libiche 1912–1942* (1977)
Crociani, Piero, & Andrea Viotti, *Le Uniformi Dell' A.O.I. (Somalia 1889–1941)* (1980)
Del Giudice, Elio & Vittorio, *Atlante delle Uniformi Militari Italiane dal 1934 ad Oggi* (1984)
Handbook on the Italian Army, May 1943
Littlejohn, David, *Foreign Legions of the Third Reich*, Vol.2 (1981)
Marzetti, Paolo, *Uniformi e Distintivi Italiani 1933-1945* (1981)
Pignato, Nicola, *Le Armi Della Fanteria Italiana nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale* (1978)
Rosignoli, Guido, *Alpini* (1989)
Rosignoli, Guido, *The Allied Forces in Italy 1943–45* (1989)
Rosignoli, Guido, *MVSN – Storia, Organizzazione, Uniformi e Distintivi* (1995)
Rosignoli, Guido, *RSI – Uniformi, Distintivi, Equipaggiamento e Armi 1943–1945* (1989)
Sparacino, Fausto, *Distintivi e Medaglie della RSI, Vol 1 & 2* (1988, 1994)
Trye, Rex, *Mussolini's Soldiers* (1995)
Viotti, Andrea, *Uniformi e Distintivi dell'Esercito Italiano nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale 1940–45* (1988)

Two commanders of 'Garibaldini' Communist partisans. The man on the left wears a captured grey-green collarless paratrooper-style jacket; his comrade seems to have a military shirt made of rough cotton. Insignia include the crudely made rank stars on patches over the left breast pockets: left, the two stars of a Battalion Commander, and right, the three of a Brigade Commander. Note the 'non-standard' cap star, left – possibly in green, white and red? Both men are armed with Stens, and the Brigade Commander seems to have some kind of pouch for magazines on his right hip. (IWM NA 20161)

ABOVE **Another group of typical partisans are pictured wearing shorts and light-weight uniforms in the summer of 1944. Their headgear appears to be a mixture of Italian Army *bustinas* and home-made peaked field caps. Some of them have coloured scarves tucked into their shirts or tunics; as this unit were 'Garibaldini' these would be red. They are well armed with Beretta and Sten SMGs, Carcano rifles, and a single Bren LMG. (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana)**

Two partisans of an Ossola Valley unit carry a wounded comrade at a parade at the end of the war. All three seem to be wearing the locally made brown tunics and trousers peculiar to the Ossola partisans (see Plate H1). Under magnification the wounded man can be seen to wear metal eidelweiss insignia on his collar and a two-star rank patch above his left breast pocket. The headgear appears to be a version of the M1942 visored *bustina* – these are most likely captured RSI items with the Fascist insignia removed. (Franco Mesturini Archives)

THE PLATES

A: DEFENCE OF SICILY, JULY/AUGUST 1943

A1: Soldato, 'Livorno' Light Infantry Division

This machine gun crewman of the 'Livorno' Division is in shirtsleeve order in the heat of Sicily, but wears the same basic 'continental' uniform as he would have done at the entry of Italy into the war in June 1940. The only real changes are that his M1933 grey-green steel helmet no longer has a black infantry branch stencil. Not illustrated here, the collar patches on his discarded M1942 tunic would be noticeably smaller than those on the M1937 and M1940 versions. He is carrying the barrel of an M1935 Revelli 8mm medium machine gun. As a machine gunner he has a holstered Beretta M1934 9mm semi-automatic, the favourite sidearm of the Italian Army.

A2: Capo manipolo, 22nd MVSN Anti-Aircraft Legion

A lieutenant of the Milizia per la Sicurezza Nazionale (MVSN) Fascist Party militia, in command of one of the second line units which made up a large part of the Sicilian garrison. He wears a tropical uniform – Sahariana jacket, breeches and M1942 tropical *bustina* cap with its distinctive soft visor. Tropical uniforms were taken from stores intended for the North African front but no longer needed since the defeat of the Axis forces in that theatre in May. His rank insignia are worn above the cuffs of the Sahariana instead of on the shoulder boards, but some officers displayed them in both positions. On the front of his cap is the brass badge of the MVSN Anti-Aircraft Militia branch. His boots are the black leather type normally worn with the continental uniform and illustrate the mixture of both types of clothing.

A3: Sergente, 206th Coastal Division

The 206th Coastal Div, one of the second line formations raised to defend the coastline of Italy, was stationed on 10 July 1943 in the far south-east corner of Sicily, directly facing the landings by 51st (Highland) Div and 1st Canadian Div of the British 8th Army's XXX Corps. He is wearing an M1916 Adrian helmet with an infantry stencil; the divisional number in Roman numerals (in this case CCVI) was supposed to be painted in the centre, but often only the Roman numerals were crudely stencilled on the helmet where the old brass badge had been. His uniform is the standard grey-green continental type, and consists of an out-of-date M1937 tunic with black upper collar facings, pantaloon trousers, wool puttees and M1912 boots. Note the coastal division collar patch, for the 206th Div a white rectangle with an orange-red triangle, bearing the star of Savoy. His rank chevrons are worn on both upper sleeves. His personal equipment is also standard issue; given the shortages of the period he is lucky to have acquired all the normal accoutrements. He is armed with the elderly 6.5mm M1891 Carcano rifle.

B: RSI – REGULAR ARMY (ENR)

B1: Colonnello, infantry, 1945

The colonel wears the new uniform adopted by the RSI army in September 1944 but only seen in small numbers before the end of the war; most officers continued to wear pre-Armistice uniforms with new insignia replacing those of the Royal Army. His new type of service dress cap shows strong German influence; it bears the newly designed infantry badge and the red piping of that branch. On the tunic the officer's rank is shown on the shoulder boards rather than on the cuffs as on the pre-Armistice uniform. The new triple red collar flame of the infantry bears the new badge of the ENR, a silver *gladio* sword and laurel wreath. Above his right breast pocket is the gilded honour badge issued to officers of the four divisions which were trained in Germany in 1943 and 1944. On the left breast pocket is the Russian Front honour badge given to survivors from Italy's participation in Germany's 'anti-Bolshevik crusade'.

A soldier of the RSI's army, wearing the grey-green M1940 wool tunic and armed with a Beretta M1938A sub-machine gun and a holstered Beretta M1934 pistol, prepares to throw a Breda M1935 hand grenade during a training exercise. His rank of *caporale maggiore* is shown by the red chevrons, one broad over two narrow, on his sleeves; and he has the RSI army's new symbol of sword and wreath on his collar, replacing the white metal star of the Royal Army (cf Plate B). (Modern History Museum, Ljubljana).

B2: Soldato, 2nd 'Littorio' Infantry Division, 1944

One of the four regular ENR divisions trained in Germany, the 'Littorio' was sometimes given the elite title of 'Grenadier' Division, but this was purely for propaganda reasons. His M1940 grey-green tunic, with the new triple red collar flames of the infantry, is worn with paratrooper pattern trousers. On the right breast he displays the silver other ranks' version of the badge issued to all personnel of the four divisions trained in Germany. The M1933 helmet is painted the same shade of grey as German helmets; it is marked with the RSI eagle stencil on the front and a tricolour shield on the left. On his German Army belt he has a holstered Beretta M1934 and the gunner's spares pouch for his MG42 light machine gun – German weapons were issued to most of these troops in an attempt to bring them up to modern standards.

B3: Caporale, 1st Bersaglieri Battalion 'B.Mussolini', 1944

This unit, formed in Verona, was one of the first to volunteer to fight for the RSI regime and reached a strength of about 1,000 men. The corporal is wearing a drab wind jacket (note the belt loops, and the lace-up side vents) with his rank above the left breast pocket. The crimson double collar flames of the Bersaglieri have been embellished with white metal skull badges; another is worn on his pocket flap. Badges like these were widely worn, and many men of this unit would have displayed variations of them. His M1933 steel helmet has no decoration apart from the traditional cockerel feathers of the Bersaglieri. He is armed with a slung M1891/1938 Carcano carbine with folding bayonet, and carries a German case for belted MG42 ammunition.

C: RSI – REPUBLICAN NATIONAL GUARD (GNR)

C1: Milite, Milan, 1944

This private of the post-Armistice successor organisation to the MVSN wears a summer version of its uniform, consisting of a khaki collarless Sahariana jacket and shorts, black shirt, and an old MVSN black fez. Each side of the neck opening he wears double black flames with the stylised silver double 'Ms' which had recently become the symbol of the GNR. He has black Army boots over grey-green woollen socks; standard issue grey-green leather belt and twin pouches; and is armed with the Carcano M1891/1938 carbine with folding bayonet.

C2: Milite, 1944

This National Guardsman is dressed in the grey-green tunic and pantaloon trousers of the pre-Armistice 'Blackshirts'; indeed, apart from his insignia he appears identical to his MVSN predecessors. The M1933 helmet has a black stencilled badge of the GNR; there were variations, but this man has the stylised double 'Ms' forming 'wings' for a vertical fasces. His collar flames are the same as those worn in the 'lapel' position by C1. The rest of his uniform and equipment is as worn pre-Armistice by both the Army and the MVSN; he is armed with a 7.35mm Carcano M1938TS carbine and has an MVSN dagger on his belt.

C3: Capitano, 'Leonessa' Armoured Group; Milan, 1944

This officer of the GNR armoured unit is wearing an Italian copy of the German M1942 Panzer uniform with a black beret. Insignia include a silver skull and crossbones badge on the beret, which also carries the three gold stars of his rank. His pin-on metal collar badges show a red 'M' with a silver fasces passing through it; his gold ranking is worn above each cuff, and on the upper left sleeve he displays the gold honour badge of the Arditi special assault troops. The silver badge on his left breast marks previous service on the Russian Front. He is armed with a Beretta M1934 and an MVSN dagger.

D: RSI – ANTI-PARTISAN FORCES

D1: Volunteer, 'Fiamme Bianche' Youth Battalion

The 'White Flames' was a special unit formed from young boy volunteers from the Fascist Youth movement, the Opera Balilla. Boys who volunteered for the unit were supposed to be at least 15 years old, but many lied about their age in order to join. His uniform is made up of a black beret with the special badge of the unit, a silver 'M' over a fasces; an M1941 collarless paratrooper-style jacket, which carries the double white flames peculiar to this unit; and baggy grey-green paratrooper's trousers. Roll-neck sweaters were popular in the RSI forces – this boy's is black. The Carcano M1891/1938 carbine seems quite suitable for this unit when one considers the extreme youth of some of its members.

D2: Volunteer, 8th Black Brigade 'Aldo Resega'

This unit, raised in Milan, was one of the largest of the Black Brigades. His black field cap, modelled on the German M1943 *Einheitsfeldmütze*, was termed the *beretto da campagna*. The Black Brigades' cap badge of a skull with a dagger in its teeth came in many slight variations. He wears a short black blouse-type jacket over a black shirt. Pinned over the left pocket is the unit name badge in red and black enamelled metal, and small red fasces badges are fixed directly to his collar. He is wearing a pair of khaki trousers, which came in various patterns, and M1912 black leather boots. The FNA-B M1943 sub-machine gun was unique to

Paratrooper of the 'Nembo' Bn in a dug-out on the Nettuno front facing the Anzio beachhead, chatting to German paratroopers from 4.Fallschirmjäger-Division. His camouflaged smock and the cover for his M1942 helmet are made up from the usual M1929 tent section material. He is wearing a 'samurai' vest which holds magazines for the Beretta SMG. Examples varied in details; this one has seven pockets on the back and probably five more across the front, with below them about six pockets to hold egg-type grenades – see Plate E2. (Vitetti Archive)

the RSI forces; it was hand tooled, and only 7,000 were manufactured. Spare magazines are carried in the triple canvas belt pouch.

D3: Sergente, Autonomous Mobile Legion 'Ettore Muti'

This large unit began life as a Black Brigade Action Squad when first raised in Milan, but was soon expanded into a very efficient Police anti-partisan unit. Like all Black Brigade units it was named after a Fascist hero, in this case Ettore Muti, a famous pilot and former bodyguard of Mussolini. On his M1941 collarless grey-green jacket the sergeant wears pointed black collar patches with small red fasces and silver skull and crossbones badges. Rank chevrons are worn on the left breast, above any medal ribbons (in this case those of the Bronze Medal for Military Valour, War Cross for Merit, and March on Rome); on the left sleeve is the blue shield of the 'E.Muti Legione'. The grey-green wool beret with silver skull and crossbones badge was common in this unit, as was the practice of wearing chevrons on the headgear as well as the jacket. He is armed with the 6.5mm Breda M1930 light machine gun, a poorly designed weapon which nevertheless was still in widespread use until 1945.

E: RSI – AUTONOMOUS UNITS & WAFFEN-SS

E1: Volunteer, 'Barbarigo' Battalion, 'X^{a} MAS' Division, 1944

The grey-green wool collarless paratrooper's tunic and baggy trousers are worn with a roll-neck sweater, M1933 steel helmet, and metal-cleated mountain boots. Sewn to the left sleeve is the metal 'X FLOTTIGLIA MAS' shield, which varied slightly in design in different battalions but always bore the large red 'X'. On the red infantry 'lapel' patches he displays the yellow metal Lion of St Mark above a white metal RSI wreathed sword. A yellow fouled anchor – without the previously used royal crown – is stencilled on the helmet front. Magazines for his Beretta M1938/43 sub-machine gun are carried in two triple canvas pouches on a broad canvas belt.

E2: Paratrooper, 'Nembo' Autonomous Parachute Battalion, 1944

A soldier of an elite RSI unit which – unusually – saw combat against Allied troops alongside the Germans at Nettuno on the perimeter of the Anzio beachhead in spring 1944. His M1942 paratrooper's steel helmet has a cover in M1929 camouflage material. His smock is made out of the same fabric, which was used for a variety of uniform items during the RSI period. Under the smock he wears the grey-green collarless M1941 tunic, roll-neck pullover and M1941 paratrooper's trousers, with high-laced paratrooper's boots. His grey-green waist belt is worn on top of a so-called 'samurai' ammunition vest, carrying about a dozen magazines for his Beretta M1938A sub-machine gun on chest and back; it also has belly pockets for half a dozen hand grenades.

E3: Waffen-Rottenführer, 'Debica' Fusilier-Bataillon, 29.Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS, 1945

This unit was named after the Polish town where it undertook its training. This junior NCO is wearing a grey-green Italian Royal Army M1940 tunic with wool M1941 paratrooper's type trousers and German ankle boots. The insignia worn on the collar are standard German SS type; the special Italian Waffen-SS eagle and fasces badge is worn on the sleeve above the rank chevrons. This arrangement – without a nationality shield – is taken directly from photographs. Over the uniform he wears a tan M1929 tent section which doubles as a poncho; these were normally seen in the camouflaged presentation. His M1933 helmet bears the SS runes decal on the left side. He is armed with a Carcano Fucile Modello 41 carbine, which appears to have been favoured over the standard rifle after 1943.

The commander of the 'Aldo Resega' Black Brigade makes a speech at a parade in Milan in 1944. He is wearing a black shirt and *'beretto da campagna'* field cap with a red fasces badge, repeated smaller on the shirt collar points. Above the medal ribbons on his shirt note the small red and black enamel badge of his unit (see Plate D2). For a unit commander the right shoulder lanyard would be of gold cord. This officer has seen service with the Italian 8th Army in Russia and wears the Eastern Front badge on his left breast pocket; both he and the officer at right have the German Winter 1941/42 ribbon in their buttonholes, and the latter also has that of the Iron Cross 2nd Class. (Allesandro Raspagni)

F: RSI FORCES & ARMY OF THE SOUTH, 1944/45

F1: Volunteer, 'X^{a} MAS' Division

This captured soldier of the 'Decima Mas' is wearing a camouflaged suit made up out of the usual M1929 material; note the Sahariana cut of the jacket extended to make caped upper sleeves. Various examples observed were all roughly along the same lines as this. Sometimes the famous 'X^{a} MAS' shield was fastened above the left breast by means of a leather strap; the only insignia worn here are the RSI wreathed sword collar badges fixed directly to the cloth. Markings on the M1933 helmet varied from a crudely stencilled red 'X^{a}' to an exact copy of the arm shield; here a black 'X^{a}' is stencilled over a diagonal tricolour shield. His

A sergeant of one of the 'Army of the South' Combat Groups rides in a jeep through a newly liberated Italian city. He is wearing British Army battledress, helmet and webbing, and his Thompson sub-machine gun can just be seen at bottom left (cf Plate F). Unusually, he does not display the *mostrine* collar insignia of his unit, only the silver star of the Royal Army pinned directly to the blouse collar. The tricolour left shoulder flash can be seen, but not the identifying emblem of the Combat Group. (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum Collection)

9mm TZ45 sub-machine gun – held by his captor F3 – was produced in a few thousand examples for the RSI late in the war. The triple magazine pouch on his belt was modelled – like most such items – on the German MP40 type, using canvas and leather.

F2: Sergente, 'Gioto' Bersaglieri Battalion, 'Legnano' Combat Group

This light infantry NCO of the Co-Belligerent Forces displays examples of the traditional features retained by Italians fighting on the Allied side. He wears an Mk II British steel helmet with the famous cockerel feathers of the Bersaglieri attached to the right side, and the badge of that corps stencilled on the front in black. Italian insignia have been added to his British '1940 Pattern' or 'Utility' battledress (which was actually introduced in 1942): the crimson double flames of the Bersaglieri on the collar, sergeant's chevrons on both sleeves, and on the upper left arm the tricolour patch – hidden here is the knight badge worked on the white stripe to identify the 'Legnano' Combat Group, but see Plate G1. His Pattern 1937 British webbing equipment is standard issue, and as a junior leader he is armed with a Thompson M1928 sub-machine gun, still in widespread use by the British Army in Italy.

F3: Soldato, 114th Infantry Regiment, 'Mantova' Combat Group

The Army of the South were kitted out by both the British and US Armies, but this private too is entirely dressed in the former's uniform: Mk II helmet with netting for foliage (here the Indian-made wide mesh often used by the 8th Army in Italy), 'Utility' pattern battledress, hobnailed 'ammo boots', with 1937 webbing, slung 1943 'light respirator', and .303in SMLE rifle. The collar patches of the 114th Inf Regt were the yellow-and-green *mostrine* of the old 104th 'Mantova' Div in which the 114th served pre-Armistice. On the upper left sleeve is the tricolour flash with the 'Mantova' Combat Group's eagle in the centre.

G: ARMY OF THE SOUTH, 1944–45

G1: Soldato, 'Aquila' Alpini Battalion, 'Legnano' Combat Group

This Bren gun 'No.1' serves with the Alpini unit which provided the 2nd Bn of the Special Infantry Regt in the 'Legnano' Combat Group. Over his 'Utility' pattern British battledress he has a British Army sleeveless leather trench jerkin – issued since the First World War as extra protection in cold weather. He has the pre-Armistice Alpini grey-green hat with the crow's feather worn by privates and the red pom-pon signifying the 2nd Battalion. The tricolour left sleeve flash bears the 'Legnano' Combat Group's medieval Lombard knight badge, and the traditional Alpini double green flames are worn on the collar. He has been issued with British Army mountain boots which are worn with short khaki puttees. He carries spare 30-round magazines for the .303in Bren LMG in his 1937 'basic' pouches and has the gunner's spare parts wallet slung from a strap.

This very neatly turned-out partisan officer is wearing an ex-Italian Army pullover smock with lace-up chest and side vents (cf Plate H2). On the left breast pocket he has a red patch with one white metal star, indicating his rank of Detachment Commander. Below the waist he seems to be kitted out in civilian ski-wear. The red scarf around his neck appears to bear some embroidered patriotic inscription, as was often the case. He has a Sam Browne belt, and although not visible here he would be armed with either an Italian or a captured German pistol. (Franco Mesturini Archives)

G2: Capitano, 35th Artillery Regiment, 'Friuli' Combat Group

With the US-made 'War Aid' battledress issued from January 1943 to British troops in the Mediterranean theatre, and a British or US shirt and tie in varying shades of khaki, he wears a light khaki tropical M1942 *bustina* as worn by the Italian Army in North Africa. The cap badge and collar flame of the artillery branch are the same as worn on pre-Armistice uniforms; but his rank stars are displayed in British style on 'slip-on' loops over his blouse shoulder straps. The left shoulder flash has the 'Fruili' Combat Group's medieval gateway insignia. His British web belt supports the 'pistol case' and ammunition pouch for his Webley revolver, and he holds a pair of British binoculars.

G3: Tenente, 184th Parachute Artillery Regiment, 'Folgore' Combat Group

This officer has managed to get hold of a suit of pre-war British 'battledress, serge', distinguished by its concealed buttons and pleated pockets. On the collar the sword and wing emblem of the Italian paratroopers is overlaid with the artillery's single black flame outlined in orange-yellow. Again, his rank stars are worn on temporary shoulder strap 'slip-ons'. The tricolour left sleeve flash bears the lightning bolt badge of the 'Folgore' Combat Group; and below this he has the brevet of the Italian paratroopers. His khaki wool beret displays the badge of the Parachute Artillery and, again, the two stars of his rank. He has the officer's set of the British 1937 webbing equipment, with belt, holster, ammunition pouch, compass pouch and binocular case; the fairly large, soft holster accommodated most types of pistol. He is also armed with the ever-popular M1938A Beretta sub-machine gun, used by all sides in the fighting in Italy in 1944–45.

H: PARTISAN FORCES, 1943–45

H1: Battalion commander, Ossola Valley partisans, 1944

The partisans of the Ossola region on the Italian/Swiss border were well organised, and this officer wears an example of the unique uniform which they were able to manufacture for at least some of their men. It consists of an Alpine hat, Sahariana-style jacket and trousers all made out of a brown wool material, and he has a pair of Italian Army Alpini boots. On the red collar patches he wears two captured German mountain troops' metal eidelweiss insignia; and above the left breast pocket he has the red rank patch with two white metal stars of a battalion commander. The red scarf does not in this case identify him as a Communist – a few non-Communist partisan groups also wore them. The Beretta sub-machine gun and pistol were in widespread use among the partisans.

H2: Communist partisan, 26th 'Garibaldi' Brigade, 1945

A member of one of the many Communist 'Garibaldini' units fighting the occupiers and Fascists, this partisan wears a mixture of military and civilian clothing typical of the diverse sources upon which these guerrillas depended. His cap is an ex-Italian Army *bustina* with the tricolour star of the 'Garibaldini' – a green disc within a white disc on a red star. His drab pullover smock is the type in use with the Bersaglieri of the pre-Armistice period; it is worn with the red scarf which shows his Communist allegiance. Civilian corduroy trousers

This 25-year-old partisan is the leader of a group who have just captured a Fascist and now poses for the camera. He is wearing a beret with the red star of the 'Garibaldini' Communist partisans, and around his neck a fringed red scarf decorated with Communist symbols. His main weapon is the Sten sub-machine gun; he also has a Beretta M1934 pistol and two types of grenade at his belt – a German stick type and a British No.36 'Mills bomb'. (IWM NA 16855)

are tucked into a pair of Italian officer's black leather boots. A German Army belt supports a holstered Walther P38 semi-automatic pistol and a spare magazine for his UD42 sub-machine gun; this is an American weapon manufactured only in small numbers, most of which were sent to arm the European resistance movements.

H3: Partisan, 'Osoppo' Brigade, Partisan Republic of Carnia, 1944

Most non-Communist partisans wore either blue or, as in this case, green scarves to distinguish themselves from their left wing opponents. On his black beret he sports a tricolour cockade, as seen in use by various types of partisan. The rest of his clothing is a mixture of civilian and military items from disparate sources. His trousers are old grey-green Italian continental pantaloons given to him by a demobbed relative; his pullover is civilian; M1912 Army boots and long socks complete his outfit. He is armed with a British Sten Mk I sub-machine gun – air-dropped to the partisans in large numbers – and carries spare magazines in a primitive home-made harness. The German stick grenade and Luftwaffe belt are reminders of another important source for the partisans' weapons and equipment.

INDEX

Figures in **bold** refer to illustrations

1° Raggruppamento Motorizzato **1**, 24, 33-34, **34**, 35, **35**

'Acqui' Division 7-8
Allied forces 3, 4, 8, 33, 37, 40
Anzio 16, 18
armoured fighting vehicles 3, 12
Army of the South 8, 34, **36**, **37**
  Combat Groups **F2-3**, **G**, 24, 33, 34, **35**, 46, **46**, 46-47
artillery 3, **4**, **15**
autonomous units **D3**, 22-23, **23**, 45

Badoglio, General 7
Black Brigades (Brigate Nere) **D2**, **3**, 8, 13-14, 14-15, 15(table), **20**, **23**, **24**, **33**, 44-45, **45**
Borghese, Prince Julio Valerio 16-17, **18**
British and Commonwealth forces 4, 8

Captain Corelli's Mandolin 7
casualties 8, 16, 33, 36
Cefalonia 7-8
Co-Belligerent Forces 8, 24
coastal divisions **A3**, 4, 5, **5**, 6, 6(table), 43
Corpo Italiano di Liberazione (CIL Italian Liberation Corps) 24, 34
Corpo Voluntari della Liberta **38**, 39, 40

equipment 3, 6
Esercito Nazionale Repubblicano (ENR National Republican Army) **B**, 8, **9**, 9-10, 10-11, 11-12, 16, **19**, **43**, 43-44

Fascist Party, the 6-7, 8, 14, 15
fighting ability 4
flags 12
'Fiamme Bianche' Youth Battalion **D1**, 44
Fortunato, Major 18
Francisci, General Enrico **4**

Gandin, General Antonio 7, 8
German forces **9**, 37, **44**
  on Sicily 3, 4, 5
  take control of Italy 7, 7-8, 8
Gran Sasso 7
Graziani, Marshal **13**, **16**
Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana(GNR) **C**, 8, **10**, **11**, 12, **12**, 13, 16, **20**, 44

headgear 5-6, **9**, 13, 18, 22, **23**, **24**, 34-35, **42**

insignia
  Army of the South 34
  Black Brigades 15
  Co-Belligerent Forces 34
  ENR 11-12
  GNR 13
  Waffen-SS 21-22
  X^a MAS 17
Italian Social Republic 7, 8
Italy 7, 8

labour camps 8
'Leonessa' Armoured Group 12

Monte Lungo, battle of, November 1943 24
morale 6
Mussolini, Benito Amilcare Andrea (1883-1945) 3, 6-7, 12, 37
MVSN militia 3, **4**, 5, 5-6, 8, 9, 12, 14

National Liberation Committee (CLN) 36
National Liberation Committee for Northern Italy (CLNAI) 36

officers **B1**, **C3**, **G2**, **H1**, 6, 9, 11-12, **33**, 34-35, **35**, **36**, 43, 44, **45**, 47
Operation 'Husky' 4
Operation 'Lehrgang' 5
order of battle
  Army of the South Combat Groups 33
  ENR 10
  Sicily 4
  Waffen-SS 21
  X^a MAS 17

Pack Transport Units 33
Pantelleria, island 3, 4
paratroopers **E2**, **G3**, **14**, 15-16, **44**, 45, 47
Partisan Republics 36-37
partisans 8, 9-10, 36-37, **39**, **41**, **46**, **47**
  organisation 37-38
  uniforms **H**, 39-40, **40**, **42**, 47
  weapons 38, **39**, **47**
Patriotic Action Groups 37

rank 13, 15, 40
  insignia of 12, **19**, **20**, 35, **38**, **43**
Rome 7
RSI. *see* Italian Social Republic
Russia 9

Sala, Major Edoardo **13**
Sicily, defence of **A**, 3, 3-5, 5-6, 43
Skorzeny, Sturmbannführer Otto (1908-67) 7

Tunisia 3

uniforms
  Army of the South **F2-3**, **G**, 34, **37**, 46, **46**, 46-47
  Black Brigades **D2**, 14-15, **20**, **23**, **24**, 44-45
  coastal divisions **A3**, **5**, 43
  ENR **B**, **9**, 10-11, **43**, 43-44
  GNR **C**, **10**, **11**, **12**, 13, 44
  Pack Transport Units 33
  partisans **H**, 39-40, **40**, **42**, 47
  Sicily **A**, 5-6, 43,
  Waffen-SS **E3**, 21-22, **22**, 45
  women 23
  X^a MAS **E1**, **F1**, **16**, 17, **17**, **18**, **21**, 45, 45-46
US forces 4, 8

Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy (1869-1947) 7

Waffen-SS, Italian volunteers **E3**, 18, 21, 21-22, **22**, 45
weapons **A**, **B2**, **10**, **11**, **18**, **43**, 43
  partisans 38, **39**, **47**
women 23, 37, **40**

X^a MAS **E1**, **F1**, 16, **16**, 16-17, **17**, 17-18, **18**, **21**, 45, 45-46

COMPANION SERIES FROM OSPREY

CAMPAIGN
Concise, authoritative accounts of history's decisive military encounters. Each 96-page book contains over 90 illustrations including maps, orders of battle, colour plates, and three-dimensional battle maps.

WARRIOR
Definitive analysis of the appearance, weapons, equipment, tactics, character and conditions of service of the individual fighting man throughout history. Each 64-page book includes full-colour uniform studies in close detail, and sectional artwork of the soldier's equipment.

NEW VANGUARD
Comprehensive histories of the design, development and operational use of the world's armoured vehicles and artillery. Each 48-page book contains eight pages of full-colour artwork including a detailed cutaway.

ORDER OF BATTLE
The most detailed information ever published on the units which fought history's great battles. Each 96-page book contains comprehensive organisation diagrams supported by ultra-detailed colour maps. Each title also includes a large fold-out base map.

ELITE
Detailed information on the organisation, appearance and fighting record of the world's most famous military bodies. This series of 64-page books, each containing some 50 photographs and diagrams and 8 to 12 full-colour plates, also covers personalities, significant military techniques, and other aspects of the history of warfare which demand a comprehensive illustrated treatment.

AIRCRAFT OF THE ACES
Focuses exclusively on the elite pilots of major air campaigns, and includes unique interviews with surviving aces sourced specifically for each volume. Each 96-page volume contains up to 40 specially commissioned artworks, unit listings, new scale plans and the best archival photography available.

COMBAT AIRCRAFT
Technical information from the world's leading aviation writers on the century's most significant military aircraft. Each 96-page volume contains up to 40 specially commissioned artworks, unit listings, new scale plans and the best archival photography available.